The Hudson Review

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Hudson Review Fellowships

We are happy to announce that four Hudson Review Fellowships will be awarded annually to writers for the next three years. The program will be administered by the Editors, with funds made available for the purpose by the Rockefeller Foundation.

Each Fellow will receive a stipend of $2,700 if unmarried, or $4,000 if married.

Candidates nominated by well qualified persons will be given serious consideration, but direct applications will be accepted only upon request. Appointments for 1956 will be made by June 1, and will be announced in our next issue.

The Editors

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EZRA POUND

Canto 96

Κρήδεμνον . . .
κρήδεμνον . . .
and the wave concealed her,
dark mass of great water.
Aestheticisme comme politique d'eglise, hardly religion.
& on the hearth burned cedar and juniper . . .
that should bear him thru these diafana
Aether pluit numismata
Tellus vomit cadavera,
Thusca quae a thure,
from the name of the incense, in this province is
ROMA *quae olim* . . . .
In the province of Tuscany is Rome, a city which formerly . . . .
And Sabines with a crow on their flag.
Brennus came for the wine, liking its quality,
Bergamo, Brescia, Ticino,
& inviting his wife to drink from her father's skull
(Cunimundus) a cup which I, Paulus, saw . .
that Tiberius Constantine was distributist,
Justinian, Chosroes, Augustae Sophiae,
lumina mundi, ἐπικόμβια . . . τὸν λαόν
or a hand out. 586 chronologically
(more or less)
Authar, marvelous reign, no violence and no passports,
Vitalis beati
More water about San Zeno than had flowed since the days of Noah
on the 16th of November
15th of Childibert, a.D. 589
water and snakes over the granaries.
Theodolinda, Theuderic from Brunhilda,
Roma caput Ecclesiae, the persians into Jerusalem
and my grand-dad got out of what is now Jugoslavia
with a bow, arrows and a wolf acting as guide
till it thought gramp looked too hungry,
comes itineris
Rothar touched with the aryan heresy

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put father, son, ghost in that order
whereas we catholics stand for equality,
And here, 77 years, lombards had been in Ticino,
and Rothar got some laws written down
and a prolog, dope already used,
even the snake cult,
concubines, bacchatur, and a murder in
San Giovanni's basilica.
Constans Augustus stripped the brass tiles from the Pantheon,
shipped 'em toward Constantinople,
and got bumped off in his bath
in Siracusa.
Reyna says the lombards struck gold for St. Michael
(Migne 95, 620)
Cedwald, Architriclin
From the golden font, kings lie in order of generation
Cuningpert elegant, and a warrior . . . .
de partibus Liguriae . . . lubricus
Aripert sank, auro gravatus, because he was carrying gold.
Who shall learn throstle's note from banded thrush
by the wind in the holly bush
Floods came in the Via Lata
and from St. Peter's down to the bridge, Ponte Milvio
et quia Karolus followed Pippin,
not Plectrude's son but Alpaide's
Wait, wait, Martel father of Pippin,
Pippin of Charlemagne,
Alpaide's son, one of 'em, not Plectrude's
empty grave outside San Zeno, to the right as you face it,
another bloke in Milano, "seven Cardinals attended his funeral,"
apud Pictavium, Aquitaine, Narbonne and Proença.
Martel, that would be in the "thirties,"
Lombards pro Carolus:
ACTUM TICINI IN PALATIO,
et Arimnium, a stone in Modena by the ambon . .
sent his son to Luitprand for a hair cut,
kept peace with franks and avars
verbo et actu corruscans
Wang's middle name not in Mathews

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in the second year of Eirene sent Constans to Carolus Magnus
sardonix pario, lilia mixta rosis,
at Tyana some idea they disapproved of.
DIOCLETIAN, 37th after Augustus, thought: more if we tax 'em
and don't annihilate. Haud procul Salonis
not far from Salo otio senuit, quietly aging,
and alleged Saturn started brass currency
"changing bowers for travertine"
Vespesiano serenitas . . . urbes renovatae
Under Antoninus, 23 years without war . . . apud Eboricum,
Severus' wife spoke to Philostratus about the biography
and about 1165 of the City (A.U. ab urbe)
Galla Placidia,
Pictorum,
Vandali,
"called Bosphorus from the bull tax"
treaty with lombards under Justinian,
goths out of Verona et Brixia,
all italian "reip." under law.
A memorial to archivists and librarians:
Bernicoli in Ravenna, and that stuffed-shirt who
wrote such an elegant postcard.
Some sort of embargo, Theodora died in the 19th Justinian.
And the money sellers Ablavius and Marcellus
thought they would bump off Justinian.
A flood of fads swilled over all Europe.
But there could have been two Abduls
and it would not have annoyed one.
That is something to note. I mean as
personality, when one says "oriental." The third bahai
said nothing remarkable. Edgar Wallace had his kind of modesty.
Caedual went to Roma, baptised 689 by some counting.
And the Eparch's book was down somewhere under all of this,
ΕΠΑΡΧΙΚΟΝ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΝ.
After 500 years, still sacrificed to that sea gull,
a colony of Phaeacians θῖνα θελύσες
ALDFRID, King of Northumbria, Nordanhymbrorum
defunctus 7 oh 5,
Aldhelm, against errors of Britons,
pro virginity in hexameters,

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de Metaplasmo, De Sinalimpha, &
fads for some hundred years,
a comet with its face toward Aquilo,
fussed about hair-cuts,
an appeal to reason is about a 13%
appeal to reality,
job-hunting in our time, and in the 3rd/ year of Justin
Sophia Augusta
made the money-sellers cough up something or other,
pecuniarium venditoribus, and in the 12th
took over the synagog,
heaped fads on Eleusis, flame under the rubble
TIBERIUS 5, 7, 3
by his spending
Thrax, Cappadox,
Lombards, Avars.
(Theophanem sequitur.)
Lombards in Exarchate, MAURICIUS Imperator
Barbarians enjoyed Roman calamities,
calamitatibus delectabantur,
equestribus speculationibus and by dealings
urbem splendidam reddidit,
this is MAURICIUS, five seventy seven,
and of course there is no local freedom
without local control of local purchasing power.
Del Mar spotted "bronze to the cities,"
sanguinibus gaudium, homicidiis amorem,
infidelitatem, jactantiam et violentiam (Hormisdae).
Priscus copped the king drunk
(Musacius) @ his brother's wake,
aerumnae non defuerunt variae,
plenty of shindies, assorted,
With eyes pervanche,
all under the Moon is under Fortuna

CHEN,

e che permutasse.

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With castled ships and images Dei Matris,
HERACLIUS, six, oh, two
imperator simul et sponsus,
found the "reip's" business unstuck,
that is, Avars made Europe a desert,
Persians exterminated all Asia

Chosdroes (Second) pro sun .

& melted down the church vessels & coined them
νομίσματα καὶ μιλιαρίσια
(which is not in Liddell D.D.),
The Deacon, col. 1026, thinks it "argenteos,"
nummos aureos et argenteos, HERACLIUS versus Chosdroes
coined candle-sticks to keep off Chosdroes
εἰκόνος
Justinian 527
Tiberius Justin
Mauricius 577
Phocas
Heraclius, six oh two, all dates approximate.
Deutschland unter Dulles, U.S.A., slightly nostalgic
by the boat-bridge over Euphrates.
Wintered then in Sebastia,
Laws aim? is against coercion.
And called them the Golden Spears, Χρυσολόχας,
Avars, Bulgars, Gepidae,
quatenus Hunnos,
against the City, Fu Lin.
Turcos quas Cazaros vocant. Six eighteen, that is.
God's Mother superlaudabilis
populus epulantes
Deum glorificantes,
pepper & zinziber, tigrides mirae magnitudinis
live ones, and antelopes,
and in sky a great phantom
from Mesembra to Arcturus
preannouncing Arabian power
and in the 11th of Constans ashes from heaven,
in the 12th Muhavis broke the Colossus
that had stood thirteen sixty years,
mille tre centos sexaginta, and
sold 900 camel-loads aere oneravit. of its brass

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to a jew
(all this chronology seven years less than the accepted).
Habdimelich made peace with the 2nd Justinian
. . . contra Zubir and burnt his home and his idols
with their idolator, sed susciperent, we are getting to
the crux of one matter

> Anno sexto imperii sui Justinianus (the second) pacem, quam ad Habdimelich habuit, ex amentia dissolvit, et omnem Cypriorum insulam, et populum irrationabiliter voluit transmigrare, et characterem qui missus fuerat ab Habdimelich, eum noviter visus esset . . . . et his auditis Habdimelich satanice stimulatus rogabat ne pax solveretur, sed susciperent monetam suam, cum Arabes non susciperent Romanorum incisionem in suis nummis. Verum dato pondere auri ait: Nullum Romanis damnum efficitur, ex eo quod Arabes nova cuderent. . . . . .
> Quod et factum est, et misit Habdimelich ad aedificandum templum Muchan, et voluit auferre columnas. . . .
>
> —col. 1060, The Deacon, Migne's Patrologia.

In fact this item, with that bit from the Eparch's edict
which was still there for Kemal in our time,
PANTA HREI, said DuBellay translating,
the base shall we say, and the slide of Byzantium,
bags, baskets full of, presumably, coinage,
and lured twenty thousand sclavons.
And in the 7th Absimarus Habdimelich died
and Justinian came back thru the aquaduct.
Franks out of Thrace in periplum,
Blood in Watling St, ruin'd by vicarious government.
Hyacinthinis,
μεγαλοζήλων why not fake purple,
vocabulary not Dr. Liddell's,
chastised and brought into the house (coom ben)
verberator et bonis mulcator
παιδενέσθω καὶ εἰσκομιζέσθω
register all silk purchases over ten aurei

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δέκα νομισμάτων (Nicole: purpureos vestes) τὰ βλαττία
but the ἀναιδῶς is rather nice, Dr. Nicole,
before the μὴ ἀυξάνοντες ἢ ἐλαττοῦντες τὴν τιμήν
and the idea of just price is somewhere,
the haggling, somewhere,

also

ἀλογίστους	quite beautifully used tho' utopian	紫	tzu³
καπηλεύων	or	之	chih¹
στομύλος	that is "mouthy"	奪	to²⁻⁵
ἀγοραῖος	forensic		
λάλος	babbler	朱	chu¹

ταραχώδης as on the East bank from Beaucaire
μὴ τῇ τοῦ ἐπάρχου ἐσφραγισμένον
not stamped with the prefect's seal βούλλῃ
καμπανὸν νενοθευμένον
Ducange: στατήρ
Here, surely, is a refinement of language

If we never write anything save what is already understood, the field of understanding will never be extended. One demands the right, now and again, to write for a few people with special interests and whose curiosity reaches into greater detail.

ᾗ καὶ νομίσματα ξέει
Wd/ appear to be tetarteron tokens
not affecting the aureus
vel pactum pretium augens
and a few words about hoarding
καιρὸν ἐνδέιας ἀποθησαυρίζη
ἐνοίκιον house rent
ἄὔξων ἐνοίκιον
"Sire, dist Hues . ."

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that was de Bosschère,
leather for carriages, not for footwear,
Xoirempers do not buy sheep
or hide pigs in the house of an arkhon
οἶκον ἀρχοντικόν
Who useth an unstamped stater
ad pretium empti
κατὰ τὴν ἐξώνησιν νομίσματος ἑνὸς
that's how Nicole slanted it, grave on the omicron,
meaning one aureus, bankers
to profit one keration 2 miliarisia
μηδεμιᾷ λειτουργίᾳ
and no liturgy (as above)
nor their beasts,
but that baking be uninterrupted
and that they take due care against fire.
TAVERNERS are to inform the prefect of wine's arrival
that he arrange the modus of sale
οἰκονομία . . . ὅπως . . πιπράσκεσθαι
constraining 'em to analogous ezonesis.
Stathmos, usually weight & aggaîa, vessels
fitting in, working together.
The stathmon shd/ hold 30 litras
and the mina, as it is called, shd/ be 3,
And on great holidays and the Lord's day κυριακαῖς
not to open before 2 o'clock
by whatever 2 that was reckoned
δευτέρας ὥρας
and at the second hour of night
ἀσφαλίζειν
lock up & σβεννύειν τὰ λεβήτια
put out their cook-fires
λέβης, a cauldron
& those who have been loafing all day there
not to come back @ night and raise ructions
τοῦ οἴνου ἐμφορούμενοι
"Constantinople" said Wyndham "our star,"
Mr. Yeats called it Byzantium,
emphorio, to be borne about, to be filled with
oinos, the fermented

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katakremnízo, to throw down or headlong
diaphora, variance
bias, vigors
and if wine-seller be found with false measures
& not bearing the proper seal
shall be smacked, cropped and
put out of the sunthema ἐκδιωκέσθωσαν
ΠΕΡΙ ΛΕΓΑΤΑΡΙΟΤ
seem to be foreign importers,
are to stay 3 months only,
the name ΒΟΘΡΩΝ ought to explain what it means
διασημαίνεται but doesn't exactly
dealin' with animals βοτόν, βοτήρ in the Foro Amastriani
τῶν ζώων τὰς αἰτίας
some animals are imperfect.
RE all contractors for fine work, plaster,
marble, askothurariōn, paint & the rest of 'em
ΛΕΠΤΟΤΡΓΩΝ
an askós is a leather bag,
with inane loquacity hoisting the wages
αὔξει τοὺς μισθοὺς σκαιότητι τῶν λόγων
lubberly, westerly στομυλία
the stench of the profit motive has covered their names
and that louse G. burnt the Palatine
and messed up the music
to speak clearly
ἀπληστία, insatiate κακουργία
This is not a mere stunt to lay fines
as is found in the hodge-podge.
θόλος a round building
καμάρα arched over
all ἀσφάλειαν to be unlikely to fall
ἐμπειρίαν & experienced
θεμέλιος the foundation, not wobbly σαθρός
After all Justinian's boy *had* built Santa Sophia
"vurry," says Pearson, N. H. "in'erestin'."
out of odd hollows and solids
μὴ τὸ κτιζόμενον λοξὸν, slanty
There is an ideogram somewhere in Morrison,
de Saumase, de Reitz

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πυρὸς, ἀέρος, ὕδατος, γῆς
after Julien d'Askalon: fire, air, water, earth,
the old men on the swaying τραπέζιον
βυρσοδέψαι, raw leather
μαλακατάριοι, softeners, second process
βυρσοποιοί
μάγκιπες the baker from his *four*,
governors, oveners
No yugo-slav to propose to a girl
until he has planted trees, 50 olives
(Ronnie, this year)
ἐγκύκλιος παίδευσις
and the chaplains of cabarets
& that Nicephoras
kolobozed the tetarteron
need not have applied to the aureus
or caused Nicole to understand token coinage
in the long war between episkeptiks
and any andrárion agorîan kai bánauson
(currently rendered as s.o.b.)
12% says Nicole, illegal
κατὰ τὴν ποιότητα
(τῶν ζώων)
acc. the quality.
Good-bye to the sun, Autumn is dying
Χαῖρε ὁ Ἥλιος
whom the ooze cannot blacken
Χαῖρε clarore.

> And in the sixth year of this Justinian the devil got into Habdimelich, satanice stimulatus, who said if we put the same amount of gold into our coinage it will do no harm to the Romans. Ut supra, as before stated in latin. And he wanted some columns for Muchan.

iustitiae . . . . nihil antiquius
"Honest feathers" says Dante, or: "What about murder?"
De Officiis, TWO, 89: "Quid occidere?"
Pascere satis, or in the '20s (our time)

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driving latin out of the schools
(France or whereso)
humiles non omnes improbi. Cicero
mousing round the edge of the paddock.
"An ater, an albus" Catullus in interrogative.
"Queer cuss with a sense of humour," Tully observing:
Nihil . . . . antiquius
and no such blue north of Capri
as on the side toward Peschiera,
Ocelle Veronensis.
Under Leo ΕΠΑΡΧΙΚΟΝ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΝ
"Following God's example Our Serenity
(γαληνότης, as of the sea)
to stop trampling by one on another
have codified πολιτικῶν σωματείων
(To Professor Nicole's annoyance) Leo 886-911
: may buy linen to line bombazine
"les arrhes du marché" re/ the drapers
βασιλεῦσι Λέων
And the notary
must have some general culture or he will
make a mess of the contracts.
: may buy gold, silver, pearls,
but not copper
ni cuivre ni tissus de lin
that is, not for resale.
Not hoard 'em and hold for a rise,
any perfumer
who wangles to get another's rent hoisted
κατὰ δόλον ἐπαύξων
shall be shaved, whipped and chucked out.
And not hold up coin either;
foreigners to sell in three months and leave,
Perfumers not to buy groceries,
but nard, aloe-wood, cinnamon,
stick to what's sold on a two pan balance, not a "romaine,"
a stadera, one of those things with a yard-arm.
Let him be either perfumer or grocer,
Candle-makers to work in their own ergastorios;
and that

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grocers may open shops anywhere
so that one can get groceries anywhere/
And if his weights aren't stamped with the prefect's seal
he shall be flogged, cropped and banished
profits at 16 and ¾ths (two miliarisia)
No baker or mill beast shall be subject to other service,
bread must go on,
No ovens in anyone's cellar
and that they go to the Prefect when the grain price
rises or falls
to find the right bread price,
Whoso tries any monkey-shines
shall be put on a jackass and led through the streets quite slowly,
flogged, shaved, and put out. Wine shops
will close at 8 in the evening.
Anybody wanting to put up a cupola must prove experience.
If a wall falls inside of ten years the builder,
unless he can prove god's wrath must
put it up again at his own cost.
To be tabulary, must know the Manuel
to recite it, and the Basiliks, 60 books
and draw up an act in the presence, and be sponsored
by the primicier and his colleagues
and have a clear Handschrift
and be neither babbler nor insolent, nor sloppy in habits
and have a style. Without perfect style
might not notice punctuation and phrases
that alter the sense,
and if he writes down a variant
his sponsors will be responsible.
Give him time to show what he's got.
And the smoke at his consecration,
incense *θυμίαμα ἐνώπιον Κυρίου*
shows how his thought shd/ go. Upward, videlicet.
And be fined if he miss procession
and the college shall go to his funeral.
SILVERSMITHS may buy what pertains to their trade,
not copper,
οὐ μὴν χαλκὸν

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nor linen save for their personal use.
If ladies (? εἴ τις) want to sell jewelry
let the goldsmith report to the Prefect &
Be sure it is not for export.
If they adulterate
Shall cost 'em a hand χειροκοπείσθω
Ὁ δόλον ποιῶν εἰσ ἀσήμιον
If foreigners try to sell the two metals,
report it.
If a silversmith buy sacred vessels, intact or otherwise,
let him report this to the Eparch
and a goldsmith report purchase of any unmarked
gold over one pound;
Work to be done ἐν . . . τῆς Μέσης on Main St.
Not in the goldsmith's home
And no one to be brought into the guild without notice
(aveu du prefet) What was the greek for aveu
in this instance? εἰδήσεως τοῦ ἐπάρχου
rather nice use of *aveu*, Professor,
though you were looking at ἄνευ.
From the Palace, half-circle that street is,
ending near the seven-towered castello.
Bankers not to file coins
nor make false ones
Nor put a slave (δοῦλον) in charge of their business
Καταλλάκτης ⟨ ⟩ κεκομμένον (double m)
If they do not notify counterfeits that come in
and from whom
shall be flogged, shaved and exiled
And in this there can have been few innovations
And before this was that affair of Habdimelich
Anno sexto imperii, of the Second Justinian
"pacem."

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JOHN HOLLOWAY

The Well-Filled Dish: An Analysis of Swift's Satire

SATIRE comes from Latin, and originally meant "a mixed dish offered to the Gods." This is very apt. Dedication to the powers of righteousness points to the serious ethical function of satire; and the medley, the rich variety, points to a complexity in technique which often baffles the literary critic, presenting him with a hard resistant nucleus that he has to skirt. Swift has suffered much from this. We have been told too often of his simplicity, and of his conciseness. Praise like this positively conceals his best qualities—his subtlety, ingenuity, wealth of content, and fineness of balance. The rich medley remains unscrutinized. The dish is passed to the gods before one learns the recipe.

To suspend praise for Swift's simplicity, and unravel a little of his complexity, does not conflict with his own view of what he wrote: but conforms to it. He praised a simple style himself:[1] but it was *simplex munditiis*, a phrase which was used by Horace of dressing hair, and which points to the final result of thought and skill, when every hair is in its place. In one of his essays (*The Importance of the Guardian Considered*), Swift even begins a list of some satirical techniques: "We have several ways here of abusing one another, without incurring the danger of the law," he writes; and mentions particularly "insinuation," which will prove to be a key term. What Swift protests against, on the other hand, is never richness and pregnancy of meaning, but "enthusiastic" jargon, solecisms, cant, and affectation. Even so, there is profit only in examining one part of his richness. Men write satire, he says, for two reasons:[2] first, to "laugh with a few friends in a corner"; second (of which laughter is perhaps the principal *method*) "to mend the World," to expose and attack what is ridiculous or vicious. Few people have ever got far with enquiring where a joke

[1] *Tatler*, No. 230.
[2] *A Vindication of Mr. Gay and the Beggars' Opera.*

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comes from. This present discussion, therefore, examines only the second function which Swift allots to satire. It asks how he organizes his work so that its satirical indictment is created; and how much, in this or that given case, the indictment contains.

This question, one might think, could be answered by tracing Swift's use of rhetoric:[3] rhetoric, in its traditional form as we find it, say, in a book like Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*. Puttenham, certainly, is aware that satire is complex: "Ye speake in derision or mockerie, & that may be many waies," he writes. Then he lists these ways, giving their traditional names, and also entertaining new English ones that he has made up: *Ironia* or the "Drie Mocke," *Asteismus* or the "Mery Scoffe," *Hiperbole* or the "Loud Lyer" and so on. But analysis in these terms would do nothing to show how satire is actually generated. The rhetorical classification is quite mechanical, and merely recognizes the presence of satire or of some sub-species of it. The same is true even of the more technical categories of rhetoric, like catachresis (using words beyond their established senses), litotes (understatement for praise) or meiosis (understatement for blame). To recognize these figures is not to understand how they create satire, and it is to ignore how the details they classify do not function alone, but catch fire in their contexts. The texture of satire at its keenest is truly organic; its parts inter-relate; sometimes it approaches the richness and integration of a poem.

One thing in satire is unique: the gap that it creates between substance and tone, between what is said and how it is said. There is no simple explanation of why, in satire, this gap can become lethal: but it can. This, though, is a point about satirical method. There is also something fundamental about what might be called the satirical situation, that in which satire can arise. It is the same situation as that in which invective can arise; for both of these (in Swift's own phrase) seek to mend the world: and this is to attack not Nature (a futile game) but people. Satire is an indictment by one man of others. It is bi-polar. Perhaps we could call the two poles the quarry, and the hunter. In Swift a type-figure of the hunter comes again and again: the plain honest man, good-

[3] Something of this sort has recently been done in Professor John M. Bullitt's able *Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire* (1953).

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hearted and common-sensical—someone like the Drapier of the *Drapier's Letters*, or the ostensible author of the *Letter of Advice to a Young Poet*. More strictly, the hunter in Swift is the joint personality which emerges from this picture and from that behind it of Swift himself, seeing its foibles and sensing (because creating) its honesty and strength.[4]

II

How is this complex personality made vivid for the reader? Largely—as with poetic complexity—by figurative language, which can create a sense of the satirist's personality because it so much controls the *tone* of his writing; and therefore our whole sense of his mind, and of how it approaches its task as writer. Other things, of course, can do this too: an autobiographical detail (the ostensible author of the *Letter of Advice to a Young Poet* was always being beaten at school for verses with false quantities), or a distinctive kind of authority for what in fact needs none, like "I am assured *by our Merchants*, that a Boy or Girl before twelve years Old, is no saleable Commodity" (*A Modest Proposal*).[5] But metaphor is perhaps the commonest, because sparing of space yet striking in effect. "*I have known a Factor* deal in as good Ware . . . as the Merchant himself that employs him," Swift writes, pointing out that actors can sometimes converse as well as gentlemen. This is from the *Letter of Advice to a Young Poet*. In the same essay the same kind of language helps create a picture of Swift's principal victims:

> Maggots being what you look for, as Monkeys do for Vermin in their Keeper's Heads . . .

[4] Since this article was completed, Mr. W. B. Ewald Jr. has published a valuable study (*The Masks of Jonathan Swift*, Harvard) of how Swift created not merely one, but several forms of "ostensible author" or *persona* in the course of his literary life. Much of what follows in the next two pages of this article receives support and important amplification from his book. This also shows how the *personae* belong closely to their historical context, their "foibles" often satirizing what Swift saw in his antagonists. It does not, however, always bring out how much the good qualities of the persona may contribute to the whole structure of the satire: this is noticeable, I think, in the discussion of the *Drapier's Letters*.

In what follows I have, like Mr. Ewald, written of the *Letter to a Young Poet* as by Swift, though the possibility that it was written by someone closely imitating him cannot be dismissed (see *The Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. H. Davis, Vol. IX, pp. xxiv-xxvii).

[5] Throughout this article, italics are the present writer's.

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> Your cunningest *Thieves* [plagiarists] . . . use to cut off the Portmanteau from behind [use only the Index of a book] without staying to dive into the Pockets of the owner.
>
> (he) bakes it with Poetic Fire, after which it will *ring like any Pancrock*.

Little by little, comparisons like these divide the reader's world into two, with the honest author on one side, and his odious or ludicrous victims on the other.

The method of depicting these two sides is, so far, not wholly parallel. We come to see the author because he *draws* analogies with the merchant and the pan-crock: we see his victims because they are *described* as monkeys or thieves, or their labours as vermin or crockery. The complete parallel would be easy to find, but it is relevant at a later stage. For the moment what is important is that these descriptive metaphors may be of two kinds. They can be (like those just quoted) quite general and vague as description, though potently scornful; or on the other hand their descriptive force can sometimes be much more precise. A good example of this is Swift's "Verse without Rhime is a Bell without a Clapper" (*Letter of Advice to a Young Poet*). This is not an attack on blank verse: it attacks degenerate rhyming, such as the bad poet might become proficient in (Swift says) by assiduous attendance at parlour-games like *crambo*. The metaphor does not assume that a bell without a clapper is bad, and leave the matter there. Its point is that bad rhyming verse clangs and booms with the futile monotony of a senseless bell. This comparison is not unexplained abuse: but condemns what it attacks by describing it.

Another example is Swift's attack on the index-scholars: in *The Tale of a Tub* he calls their way of going to work:

> the choicer, the profounder, and politer Method . . . by which the whole Book is governed and turned, *like Fishes by the Tail*.

The first words of this make it plain that the comparison is with eating, not cooking; and the *statement* insinuated about these pseudo-scholars is that they treat the books of their betters with the affectation and thoughtlessness of the fop at dinner. Swift uses the technique again at the end of the *Letter of Advice to a Young Poet*, when he suggests that perhaps every rich man ought to have a tame versifier on the domestic staff:

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> for, perhaps, a Rhimer is as necessary amongst Servants of a House, as a Dobben with his Bells, at the Head of a Team.

A Dobben is a leading draught horse, and not disagreeable in itself, like thieves or vermin. The comparison disparages by *describing* the bad poet, as he plods along mechanically like a horse, and produces nothing but the inane jingle of the horse's bells. In all these cases, the metaphor conveys not mere scorn, but a specific fact, a real piece of information, which justifies scorn.

III

Working on a larger scale, Swift can sometimes write a whole essay around a single complex analogy. The best example is the difficult *Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*. Here Swift's purpose is to attack fanaticism in religion, and his method is to create an overwhelmingly strong idea, from a multitude of converging details, of fanaticism or enthusiasm as a mere bodily excretion, which produces troublesome physical disorder unless it is evacuated like the other excretions. Throughout the essay, three comparisons help to bring this about: the product of the enthusiast's brain is likened to that of the nose (Analogy 1); the anus (Analogy 2); and the genital organs (Analogy 3).

These, says Swift, are not mere random likenesses. They are there because of a real organic continuity. He can argue legitimately for this:

> Besides, the Spinal Marrow, being nothing else but a Continuation of the Brain, musts needs create a very free Communication between the Superior Faculties and those below.

But even here, a careful choice of words has interlocked a real connection and a fortuitous likeness. "Spinal marrow" brings out not only a significant physiological linkage, but also a chance physical resemblance, for Swift has already been telling his readers a humorous fable about the brain:

> It is the Opinion of Choice Virtuosi, that the Brain is only a Crowd of little Animals . . . like the Picture of Hobbes' Leviathan . . . their Food is the Air we attract, and their Excrement *Phlegm*.

Both the first two analogies are here.[6] But Swift goes further: colds

[6] It must be left to the reader to decide whether Analogy 2 is also present at the beginning of this piece, where Swift likens the enthusiastic audience to Mahomet

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and rheums are merely an "epidemical *looseness*" of the little animals of the brain; and he has not yet finished with the phlegm analogy. Among the fanatic preachers:

> A Master Workman shall *blow his Nose* so powerfully as to pierce the Hearts of his People . . .

and a quite unscrupulous pun draws the link tighter still:

> It is frequent for a single *Vowel* to draw Sighs from a Multitude, and for a whole *Ass*embly of Saints to sob to the Musick of one solitary *Liquid.*

Plainly the liquid, besides being a consonant and an excretion, can also be alcohol. But although Swift elaborates this joke for a while, he in the end retracts it. Enthusiasm "cannot be imputed to intoxication by wine, but must needs have a deeper foundation."[7]

So far as he himself is concerned, though, "deeper" here has no laudatory meaning; it simply means "lower down the body than the mouth or even stomach." Swift is introducing Analogy 3 into his scheme, and has another tale to tell; this time, why the Puritans preach through their noses. They do so, he gravely recounts, in imitation of the "Banbury saint" whose inspiration, when it had no oratorical outlet, drove him along less reputable channels, and made him catch syphilis. The surgeon cured the parts primarily affected; but the disease then retreated to the original seat of disturbance, and passing by the nose on the way, "broke down the bridge and retired to headquarters." Other metaphors, throughout the essay, sustain this ingenious myth. When the body troubles the mind, it is with "huge Rippon *Spurs,*" with a "*Thorn* in the Flesh" that is a "Spur to the Spirit"; and "the *seed* or principle which has ever put men upon visions in things invisible is of a corporeal nature," Swift adds. Finally, he links Analogies 1 and 3 by linking the preacher and the wooer:

"borne to heaven upon nothing but his *Ass*"; an idea resumed later when the Puritan preacher is likened to Darius's horse, which came to neigh through covering a mare (Analogy 3). Swift, in this second passage, avoids the word "horse," using "animal" or "beast" throughout instead.

[7] Swift also adds the analogy with belching at this point, and in the parallel passage in the *Tale of a Tub* reminds his reader that the Latin word (*eructatio*) also meant to deliver an oracle (1720 edition).

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> If we inspect into the usual Process of modern Courtship, we shall find it to consist in . . . an artificial Form of Canting and Whining by rote, every Interval, for want of other Matter, made up with a Shrug or a Hum, a Sigh or a Groan.

Thus, all in all, the whole essay is made up of one complex analogy: and this is developed through a medley of devices—plain statement, pun, exaggeration, fable, individual metaphor—which can only be unravelled by methods like those of poetical analysis.

IV

Satire is an attack by ridicule upon evil. If the author reveals this evil too blatantly, or stresses it too much, it will be hard for him to maintain the suave tone which ridicule requires. But satire will have a clear superiority over invective only if, besides its own achievement, it can also do all that invective does. Veiled or not, the brutal facts must in the end transpire. *Insinuation* (Swift's own word) brings this about: the brutal fact is a wolf in sheep's clothing, slipped in under the fact which is, or seems, innocent.

Insinuation is largely what creates the effectiveness of *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Ireland from being a Burden to their Parents*. The central idea of this essay is well-known; but beneath the single vivid and hideous image, there is a richness of concealed meaning which even Swift himself seldom rivals. In ten short pages, while the reader's attention seems to be occupied primarily with his horrifying fantasy of turning all the babies into meat, he marks out just what Ireland was like at the time, and just who made it so. The record is complete: yet Swift seems never to have had to begin it. Below, in a diagram form for clarity, are a few of the "sheep-statements," as one might call them, with some indication each time of the concealed wolf:

Text	*Insinuation*
. . . which would move Tears and Pity in the most Savage and inhuman breast.	But doesn't in human ones, they are harder still.
From (200,000) I subtract thirty thousand Couples, who are able to maintain their own children.	85% are starving.

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I have been assured by a very knowing American[8] of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy Child . . . is at a year Old a most delicious wholesome Food.	London is the place to meet those who treat humans as animals.
Those who are more thrifty . . . may flay the Carcass . . .	And people would.[9]
. . . the Skins of which . . . will make admirable Gloves for Ladies, and Summer Boots for fine Gentlemen.	While some starve, some live in trashy luxury.
The poorer Tenants will have something valuable of their own which . . . may . . . help to pay their Landlord's Rent.	And the landlords would take it.

Many of these are obvious enough: though fresh barbs protrude at each reading. But the crucial point is this: for all that it is a satire, *The Modest Proposal* manages to insinuate facts, and in a way which is detailed, comprehensive, and damning.

Another important device in Swift for insinuation is the catalogue. Professor Bullitt has discussed this in his book, and written of the "witty juxtaposition and, by inference, equation" of the supposedly virtuous and admittedly vicious in lists like "Beaux, Fidlers, Poets and Politicians," "Parliament-, Coffee-, Play-, and Bawdy-Houses." This "uneasy quality" he regards as a form of "diminution" (what I have called disparagement), and he says that it helps Swift to amuse as well as abuse. But this amusement, this wit, appears on his analysis to draw the sting from Swift's attack, and to do so by design: "we are continually *surprised out of anger* by the wit of the juxtapositions . . . the element of witty surprise is strong enough to *startle the mind from* the sense of total contempt." Surely this is to overlook what the catalogue is: not an arbitrary juxtaposition, but a juxtaposition which through its quality of paradox is a challenge to the reader to recall the facts which remove the paradox: which make the catalogue plainly a valid one. It is a challenge, that is, to find the hidden insinuations.

In the list above, for example, "Beau" is a term which we know must point to bad qualities. But once we recall this, do we and

[8] The point of this is simply that the American has had a chance to learn from "savages," whom Swift mentions a few lines later.

[9] He was right.

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must we not trace the same qualities in a Fiddler? even a poet? why, even a politician? We reflect; the insinuations come out; and the catalogue turns into a condemnation because of what it precisely, though covertly, states. Similarly with a list like "turn our Courts, Exchanges, and Shops into Desarts" (*Argument against Abolishing Christianity*). This is no joke. The likeness is real, and the list a challenge to detect it. Another barbed list comes not much later:

> If the Physicians would forbid us to pronounce the Words Pox, Gout, Rheumatism, and Stone, would that . . . destroy the Diseases?

Simply by picking on these diseases and not others, Swift implies they are the chief ones. Then he so arranges them as to imply that they come from vice and excess. This we take for granted of pox. But gout, the reader begins to recall, can come from vice too:

> O may I live exempted (while I live
> Guiltless of *pamper'd appetite obscene*)
> From pangs arthritic that infest the toe
> Of libertine excess.

is Cowper's charming periphrasis in *The Task*.[10] By now the challenge to detect Swift's implication is created; and we come to realize that all four diseases can come from the same kinds of excess. What brings us to our end, Swift is saying, is above all our vice.

V

Satire is not paradoxical only in its catalogues: it tends towards an unobtrusive kind of paradox in all that it says. But the paradoxical assertions of satire are not left to hit or miss the mark simply as chance directs. They are constantly being, as it were, "justified"; and this is what creates the double sense that irony requires. The unjustified paradox comes as a witty surprise, and so far we merely watch the writer conducting a poised, delicate verbal game. Then the second, serious meaning emerges, the truth shows behind the extravagance, and the writer has begun to mend the world. This almost continuous texture of paradox is maintained by utilizing—through seeming defiance—the over-

[10] *The Sofa*, ll. 103-106.

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riding control which words exercise upon their own context. Often enough, one part of a sentence virtually dictates what can come in another part; or at least, dictates the sense which the other words must have, if the whole sentence is to mean anything at all. Swift knows how to exploit this linguistic compulsion. Often he writes so that his words display a centrifugal force: they seem to refuse contact with each other, like similar magnetic poles. This is the challenge to the reader, who is driven to find senses for the words which force them into contact; and it is in the search for these second senses that the ironical second meaning—the true meaning—of the whole sentence emerges, and the jabbing point of the irony goes home.

The first sentence of the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity* shows this clearly. Here it is, with two vital words left out:

> I am very sensible what a Weakness and Presumption it is, to — against the general — and Disposition of the World.

In the first space, the words "Weakness and Presumption" plainly make the reader expect a disparaging word like "rail" or "cavil," or at least a neutral one like "argue." In the second, "general . . . Disposition of the World" makes him expect an approving or at least neutral word, like "wisdom" or "outlook." Instead, Swift chooses words which, if taken at their face value, would disintegrate his sentence:

> I am very sensible what a Weakness and Presumption it is, to *reason* against the general *Humour* and Disposition of the World.

There is the paradox: Weakness and Presumption are rational, and the World is not. The two intruding words force us to reinterpret the whole sentence; and this only settles into sense again, when we have seen that its writer's presumption lies not in thinking to correct the world's wisdom, but in hoping to put right its irredeemable folly.

In Swift's text, another example follows almost at once:

> This may perhaps appear too great a Paradox even for our wise and paradoxical Age to endure; therefore I shall handle it with all Tenderness, and with the utmost Deference to that great and profound Majority which is of another *Sentiment*.

Why does the heavily ironical last word threaten to disintegrate

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the whole sentence? Because for Swift it was nonsense that something rational like an opinion should defer to something irrational like a sentiment; and it is a sharp let-down, that the great and profound majority have nothing better than this for the individual to defer to. But even as this centrifugal force develops in our minds, the words develop senses which counter it. After all, "great and profound" may mean only "large and abysmal." "Paradoxical" may be not a word of praise ("paradox-understanding") or a neutral word ("paradox-loving"), but merely an ironical synonym for *ir*rational, incomprehensible—in fact, *mad* (a point for later in this discussion). Thus, little by little, the sentence prescribes what meaning it must have, if it is not to be nonsense. The ironical implications emerge. "Insinuation" begins.

The word "Wit" is especially useful to Swift in manoeuvres like these, because the distinction between true and false wit was a commonplace:[11]

> two young Gentlemen of real Hopes, bright Wit, and profound Judgement, who, upon a thorough Examination of Causes and Effects, and by the mere Force of natural Abilities, without the least Tincture of Learning, having made a Discovery . . . (*Argument against Abolishing Christianity*)

In this passage, "wit" is clearly driven into meaning "false wit." First, a "bright" wit sounds suspiciously like a small one, and true wit is never without learning. The sentence can accommodate these facts only when we recollect that "real hopes" might mean only keen ones; that we have seen a pun in "profound" before; that the "mere" force of natural abilities is more disparagement than praise; and that when right and wrong are in question, causes and effects may be a ludicrous irrelevance. Resolving the paradox transforms seeming praise into final condemnation.

The sequel to this passage brings out how Swift could also shape his metaphors so as to confirm the senses which he allots to his words. "Tho' a Wit need not have Religion," he writes, "religion is necessary to a Wit, as an Instrument is to the Hand that plays upon it": the Beau-Fidler-Poet parallel once again. The next metaphor is a perfect emblem: ". . . and for this the Moderns plead the Example of their great Idol Lucretius, who had not

[11] See Addison, *Spectator*, No. 62.

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been by half so eminent a Poet (as he truly was) but that he stood tip-toe on Religion, *Religio pedibus subjecta.*" Swift ingeniously saves Lucretius by the parenthesis; but the "tip-toe" (which is quite arbitrary) settles once for all whether the victim is wit or religion.

This contrast between the two kinds of wit shows the ambiguity between the good variety of something, and its bad variety, which is basic to satire. Swift can make very slight touches indicate that he means the bad variety of what he refers to: "You may in a short time arrive at the Accomplishments of a Poet, and shine in that Character," he writes: or, "our prettiest Performers that way" (*Advice to a Young Poet*). In each case, a concealed metaphor of the Beau or fiddler or player prescribes the spurious sense for "Poet." "I could produce many more shining passages out of our principal poets of both sexes" (*A Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation*) does the same: for Swift, principal women poets simply do not make up a class. Similarly, "monstrous Wits in the Poetic Way" are not great but deformed ones; and "those whose Genius, *by continual Practice*, hath been wholly turn'd upon Raillery and Invectives against Religion" prescribes the spurious sense for "genius": the true kind is unaffected by practice, however assiduous.

VI

This points to one further technique of satire. To identify the spurious sense of a word is to indicate the fools or rogues who give it that sense:

> There are, by computation, in this Kingdom, above ten thousand Parsons, whose Revenues, added to those of my Lords the Bishops, would suffice to maintain at least two hundred Young Gentlemen of Wit and Pleasure, and Free-thinking Enemies to Priest-craft, narrow Principles, Pedantry and Prejudices, who might be an Ornament to the Court and Town. (*Argument against Abolishing Christianity*)

These Young Gentlemen are branded, in the first place, by the insinuation that they are so expensive they must be extravagant, and (through the metaphor "ornament") that they are a little too much like porcelain. But the insinuations affect the rest of the passage. To begin with, we detect the less obvious meaning of "narrow Principles": the contrast is not with humane Principles,

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but with broad *licence*. But in this bad sense, "narrow Principles" is a phrase which the passage forces upon the young gentlemen. It means, "what *they* call narrow principles," it is imputed to them. If so, however, it means "true principles." But "Priest-craft . . . Pedantry, and Prejudices" can in that case also be imputed, and they come to mean true religion, learning and sound opinion. Only then, with the spurious senses firmly allotted to the victims of the satire, does the passage settle down to its ironical sense.

This trick can also be played with a metaphor:

> To what Purpose shou'd we go thither for Coals or Poetry, when we have a Vein within ourselves equally Good and more Convenient? (*Advice to a Young Poet*)

is an example, and another is

> the Quarrel is not against any particular Points of hard Digestion in the Christian System, but against Religion in general. (*Argument against Abolishing Christianity*)

Coals and poetry, spiritual food and physical, are not of course indistinguishable to Swift himself. They are jumbled together by the ostensible author, the Drapier-figure, because Swift is treating him like a ventriloquist's doll: and this doll is using the comparison which (Swift implies) would seem cogent to the victims of the satire. These are imputed metaphors, foisted by the hunter on to his quarry. Similarly, when Swift speaks (in the *Modest Proposal*) of a new-born child as "just dropped from its Dam," he is using the language of those whom he is attacking, those who treat parents and children too as they would treat animals, and "as they have already devoured most of the Parents seem to have the best title to the Children." And when he writes:

> The number of Souls in this Kingdom being usually reckoned to one Million and a half, Of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand Couple whose Wives are Breeders

"Couple" and "Breeder" are words for animals, but the metaphor would come quite naturally to his opponents. He has slipped his own literal word in at the beginning, it is the word "soul."

VII

I have been arguing so far that criticism of Swift as a writer has in part been hamstrung, because critics have scarcely had such

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instruments for scrutinizing his satire as could make that scrutiny sharp and full. For this, one must develop at least the rudiments of a theory of satire. Not to recognize that satire is likely to create a sense of its author's personality and mood, to impute its meanings and metaphors, to suggest (through paradox) one meaning, then eradicate it and employ another, is like not recognizing that poetry can work through rhythm or symbol or choice of diction. But once the instruments of scrutiny have been distinguished, they can help not only with Swift's general quality as a satirist, but also with what is most distinctive of him.

This most distinctive quality establishes a profound difference between Swift and his contemporaries. It is something which makes us see him, in our final assessment, either as a monster, or as rising head and shoulders above the others, a larger, wiser, and in a true sense profoundly humaner figure. It shows clearly, against the contrast of what Pope has to say in his *Epilogue to the Satires*. In these two Dialogues, Pope sets out the reasons why he has persisted in satire, and puts objections to it into the mouth of a friend. But one feels as one reads that, brilliant though Pope may be, fine as is the stand he takes, searching as is his regard, there is at bottom something shallow in his thought—that there is, in fact, only a thoughtlessness which his high-minded stridency manages to betray. It seems that (as Bagehot said of a man who had not read Homer or seen the sea) "there is a great object of which he has no idea." There is a reason against satire enormously more cogent than any he allows to his poor interlocutor: one which might be put in Swift's last known spoken words, "they had much better leave it alone." For the weakness of moral satire, satire that aims at mending the world, is that unless men really can be laughed or mocked *out* of folly and vice, these attacks on young gentlemen of wit and pleasure come much too near the knuckle. If men are irredeemable, then the satirist who laughs in a corner with a few friends is merely one more of the ingenious "projectors," the fiddling buffoons, whom he attacks with such laboured but misplaced high-mindedness. Second time round (to revert to an analogy used before) the wise man is the fool, the hunter finds that he has no quarry but himself.

From the beginning, Swift knew he might prove to be this fool. This is what drives him to begin all afresh, midway through the

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famous "Digression concerning Madness" in the *Tale of a Tub*: that he does so is a point which has not, I believe, been properly noticed. The first half is a conventional Swiftian attack on that "Enthusiasm" which is the origin of all "schemes" in philosophy and all great empires and conquerors in history. Here, Swift's account of this condition is that of the *Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*: "vapours ascending from the lower faculties to overshadow the brain." Half way through the piece, he is still condemning enthusiasm and all that it creates:

> the Brain, in its natural Position and State of Serenity, disposeth its Owner to pass his Life in the common Forms, without any Thought of subduing Multitudes to his Power, his Reasons, or his Visions . . . but when a Man's Fancy gets astride on his Reason . . . and common Understanding, as well as common Sense, is Kicked out of Doors; the first Proselyte he makes is Himself, and when that is once compass'd, the Difficulty is not so great in bringing over others . . . for, Cant and Vision are to the Ear and the Eye, the same that Tickling is to the Touch.

So far, his course is the plain one. But then, suddenly in the middle of a paragraph, the passage modulates until it somersaults. The second, deeper level of Swift's mind comes to the surface. The argument turns more and more into an admission that in a mad world (which is what this world is), wisdom and reason cannot possibly bring happiness: so perhaps, after all, folly and blindness make a kind of wisdom of their own. Swift never quite gives in. Partly he evades the disastrous admission: it is "what is generally *called* happiness" that is "a perpetual possession of being well deceived." But in a passage like the following, one can see that what Swift mocks at a level of witty frivolity also attracts him powerfully at a deeper level of truth:

> How fading and insipid do all Objects accost us that are not convey'd in the Vehicle of Delusion! how shrunk is every Thing as it appears in the Glass of Nature! So, that if it were not for the Assistance of Artificial Mediums, false Lights, refracted Angles, Varnish and Tinsel, there would be a mighty Level in the Felicity and Enjoyments of Mortal Men. If this were seriously considered by the World, as I have a certain Reason to suspect it hardly will; Men would no longer reckon among their high Points of Wisdom, the Art of exposing weak Sides and publishing Infirmities.

The attack on folly never quite disappears, but the second half

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of this whole digression turns into a full-scale *Eloge de la Folie*: "a Man, truly wise, creams off Nature, leaving the Sour and the Dregs for Philosophy and Reason"; and it culminates in Swift's admitting (or is it boasting?) that he, the author of these momentous truths, is mad himself.[12]

In Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift is of course known to treat human beings as utterly depraved. The grey horse whom he refers to always as "my master" found us a "sort of animals to whose share some small pittance of reason had fallen, whereof we made no other use than by its assistance to aggravate our natural corruptions." But Swift's virtual despair over mankind did not need always to be stated outright. It weaves into the texture of his irony: the implication that removing one abuse will only highlight others is constant. Perhaps the most striking thing about the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity* is how it insinuates that although free-thinkers are corrupt, they are little worse than anything else which is not a mere dream, but a reality. It is no good to abolish the Christian faith, Swift says, in an effort to reduce political strife. "There is one darling Inclination of Mankind . . . the Spirit of Opposition": prevent men from quarrelling about one thing, they will ferret out another. Nor can we hope that if religion is abolished, education will no longer inculcate "grievous Prejudices"[13] like virtue, conscience and the rest: those all stopped long ago. England's "Christian" neighbours take a pride in the *name* of Christian, but the Turks are more shocked at Infidelity than they are. Even the ministers of religion are no more than "ten thousand Parsons reduced, by the wise regulations of Henry the Eighth, to the Necessity of a low Diet, and Moderate exercise, who are the great Restorers of our Breed." Insinuation here is powerfully compressed: "wise" (unless imputed) means shrewdly lucrative;[14] the parsons live temperately because they are obliged

[12] F. R. Leavis, in his essay on *The Irony of Swift*, notices this: "It is as if one found Swift in the place—at the point of view—where one expected to find his butt." He considers, though, that the ambiguity disappears, and concludes that Swift "never found anything better to contend for than a skin, a surface, an outward show." It is very hard to agree with this. Professor R. Quintana, in his excellent new survey, *Swift, an Introduction* (Oxford), notes the "dramatic change of tone" at this point, and says that "the irony is complex" (p. 65), but does not pursue the matter.

[13] "Grievous" here reminding us of the strength of our depravity as well as of the strength of conscience.

[14] Swift's hostility to Henry VIII is clear from his *Preface to the Bishop of Sarum's Introduction* (1713).

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to (otherwise they might ruin the Breed as effectively as the rest do); and the moderate exercise is not walking instead of running, but half-hearted fulfilment of duty. Hint by hint, the essay grows into a condemnation of the whole existing basis of civil life. As it proceeds, we come to see why Swift has said that, "whether from the Affectation of Singularity or *the perverseness of Human Nature,*" he could not share the majority view: the perverseness is not his own private eccentricity, but the general way of life.

This comes again in a poignant twist at the end of the *Modest Proposal,* where Swift says how relieved he was to think at last of a simple and attractive idea like cooking all the babies, after he had been "wearied out for many Years with offering vain, idle, visionary Thoughts, and at length utterly despairing of Success." The passage uses the very word "projector" (which means Inventor, Planner in the bad modern sense) that Swift had used ironically of himself at the start of the essay. But there it casts a satirical light on the Proposal; here the vain and visionary schemes are the common-sense projects of an economic kind that he had put forward all to no purpose. But "let no Man talk to me of these and the like Expedients, till he hath at least some Glimpse of Hope." He himself has none any more.

The same despair shows in Swift's very last work: the three dialogues (fruit of a wonderfully sharp but seethingly exasperated perception) which make up the *Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation.* Here in the Introduction Swift satirically claims that this work ought to bring him immortality: and says why. By means of these dialogues, just everyone can master the art of polite conversation, and shine in society: and were there not ancient heroes who even attained divine honours, merely "upon the merit of having civilized a fierce and barbarous people"? At bottom, this is what Swift believed that he confronted himself: not flaws in a good society, but a fierce and barbarous people, a world of latent Yahoos.

In fact, this last work is symbolic. By now Swift's attack is only an oblique one; he has, in the main, replaced his attacks on folly by the infinitely patient cataloguing of folly. His other very late work, the *Directions to Servants,* is much the same, although he ironically called it "very useful as well as humorous." There is no missionary faith now, only a hopeless, amused, slightly incredulous

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record of limitless fatuity. "It is today as entertaining and amusing, as it was in its own time. Indeed, in many respects it is as true of today," writes Swift's editor, with unconscious irony. It was only a laugh in a corner for a few friends—indeed, by this time Swift was short even of them.

[*This article is the first in a series of revaluations of 18th Century English writers.*]

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RICHMOND LATTIMORE

Hercules at the Crossroads

Through drenched grass, dawn unmisting, the April day's
prime hour, to a place where a spring comes cold in the shadow of poplar trees
and the cross-arms of the pounded road branch, two ways,
young Hercules
trudged, singing the morning up. And there in the shade
two girls waited him. She of the left hand fork stood pale
and sweet, in a flowered dress, and smiled with made
lips, and allured him with a blue gaze, and sidled forward to hail

her hero. "Hercules. Here your way lies, my way. Here.
Take my hand, I will show you, but see how temperate, gentle and green
it goes. So shall your dearest life go with your hand in mine. Never fear,
I shall not leave you. Between
here and your days' end think nothing but cool progress, soft-soled
walking, sleep for hours, blithe company, agemates outwrestled, girls—yes, creamy legs, blond
looks; long nights of shorn white rosefall; for sedate age, goods and gold;
green sinews, honors lightly lifted, good memories. Look not beyond.

This is real." She ended, down-lashed, demure. And presently now, she
of the right hand way came forward, queenly and sober, and by no means
repellent with her dusky plaits and grave eyes, and told him: "See where your way leans
to the rock-base and the skinny thorn, the dry of the gorge where crickets
buzz through bones in bare sun and the big animals move in the night.
Haul up the stony grades day by day and scratch for sleep in the thickets.
Dry bread, strong food, scant water. Furthermore, you will have to fight

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the hazards that fester our ways. The coarse footpad, ruffian, grifter,
wizard and phony
shall test your nerve and brain, gristle and grip. Your pace will
be slow,
your nights dogged and bare, days thin, and the trail stony.
I shall not go
with you. I have told you. You are alone. Good luck and good bye."
Hercules
stood footlocked and black with doubt, brow bent;
then chose, turned right, and stepped out of the poplar trees.
His eye slid once to the left. He waved and went.

Now here began a succession of sick and disastrous years
for the tough, the greedy, the cruel and sly of the world, here began
a most pitiable outcry, thumping and struggle as he laid them all
by the ears.
The strenuous little man
who fought from grinning helm with spear or bare with his bones,
club, wrenched broad boles,
mashed snake heads, speared pounded butted or strangled lion
and bull,
outsize pig, giant and ogre, and the monsters crawled away and
hid in their holes.
Much done. But a thin and ragged life. Who has told how scarred
and twisted, how pitiful

and used, the hero who walked the grand peaks in the end of his
time?
A sad strong man, remembering every fight
and harsh from sour triumphs, fear and sickness, the gift of his
prime,
the bare night
alone in the slum of the mind, the inward niggle of doubt.
Had he chosen right at the fork of the ways. Was it worth
the beating it took to pacify and set right a world torn inside out,
and fight his way to being the best man on earth?

This is a moral and momentous story I tell.
Here is the Y-shape of tragic choice, Hecate's fork, our sprung
three-piece cross;
the trails to heaven and hell.
Yes, but which is which? The philosopher's gloss
I give you is one way of the fable, for the refined spirits

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to read and ponder. Crasser souls will have it that Hercules
never was lonely. He was a cram-eater, a lap-handling bully boy.
Doubtless with merits
but much rewarded. We disagree. Now back to my scene at the
trees.

The dark girl had told him nothing whatever about any reward.
It is true, he is chapeled with St. Demetrius and St. George, a hero
in glory
with angelic sword.
He is said also to have loved many lovelies along the way, but this
will not accord with our story.
The somber she of the right was gone from his life.
But brute work captures charms and heroes sometimes land in the
lush. Did he ever see his little friend
in the flowered skirt again? Find her waiting after all at a last
crossroad and make her his wife?
I do not know. But it seems established Hercules married well at
the fiction's end.

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The Bridge at Arta

FREELY TRANSLATED FROM THE MODERN GREEK (ANONYMOUS)

There were master masons forty-five
there by the water's edge,
and sixty apprentices worked with them
to build the Arta bridge.

All day they would work to build it.
Each evening it would fall.
Mourned then the master masons
and their apprentices all:

"Useless the work we waste on this
and vain the toil of our hands.
All day we strive to build the bridge,
in the evening nothing stands."

With that there came a little bird
and across the river flew.
It did not sing the way birds sing
nor as the swallows do.
When it sang it spoke in a human voice
and told them what it knew.

"Unless you kill a human soul
your bridge will never stand,
but you must not kill an orphan child
nor a stranger in the land.

But there is the master mason's wife,
and she is sweet as a rose.
Let her come slow, let her come swift,
to see how your work goes."

The master mason heard him speak
and death was in what he heard.
He thought upon his little light wife
and spoke his thought to the bird:

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"Late must she rise, late must she dress,
late must she take her way,
late must she come to the Arta bridge
to see what we do today."
But the little bird paid him no heed
but said what it wished to say:

"Rise swift, my dear, dress swift, my dear,
and swiftly take your way,
and swiftly come to the Arta bridge
to see what they do today."

They saw her come down the white road.
They saw the way she took.
The master mason watched her come.
The heart inside him broke.
From far away she greeted them,
from close at hand she spoke:

"Good health to you, joy be with you,
each master and every lad;
but what ails the master mason,
and why is he so sad?"

"Oh, it is my ring that I have dropped
over the foremost pier,
and who will go down and who will stay down
and fetch it to me here?"

"Now master, I will fetch the ring.
You shall not be so crossed.
For I will go down and I will stay down
till I find the ring you lost."

She scarce had gone down to the water side
and scarce stood by the pier
when "Let down the rope," she cried to him,
"let down the rope, my dear,
for I have searched through all this place,
and I find nothing here."

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Then one threw rubble and one threw lime
on where she stood below,
but the master mason took a great stone,
lifted, and let it go.

"Now a curse upon the fate of me
and mine, for it was hard.
There were three of us who were sisters once
and the three of us were ill starred.

One sister was killed for the Danube bridge
and one the Euphrates slew.
Now here beneath the Arta bridge
I meet my own death too.

Then as the leaves of the walnut tree
are shaken and drift down,
so let this bridge be shaken, and they
who cross it tumble and drown."

"Now speak a different curse, my lass,
and put the old curse by,
or you might curse your only brother
and he might cross and die."

Then she changed her words, she changed her curse,
all for her brother's sake.
"When the wild mountains tremble
let this bridge tremble and break.

Let those who cross fall in and drown
when the wild birds fall from the sky,
for the sake of my brother in a far land
that he may not cross and die."

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MAY SARTON

The Phoenix

It is time the big bird with the angry neck
We have cajoled and cursed
Went home to die, or whatever he must do
When his heart would burst.

For his wild desire pulses over our heads
And opens the secret night,
Passage of wings that madden without release
When the phoenix is in flight.

Let him go, stretching his long legs, clumsy
On this harsh ground. Let him flee
To the soft black marshes he remembers
Or the gentle mother tree.

Let him go. He has shaken the house at night;
His wings have clouded our dream,
And there is no peace for his lost cry at daybreak
And at night his terrible scream.

He flames through the morning yet he never sings;
He only makes that strange lost cry.
He is angry all the time. Let him find his tree
And make his nest and die.

Though he is God's own angel in disguise,
We cannot bear another angry word,
Nor look into those cold and jewelled eyes,
O pitiless strange bird!

Will he come back, will he come back all shining
From his dark death to bring
The true message, the gentle, that all his torment
Was desperate to sing?

Or—what if it were not he at all, not he
Who must consume himself to be reborn,
But we ourselves who drove an angel from us
Because our hearts were torn?

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The Frog, That Naked Creature

The frog, that naked creature,
Arouses immediate pity;
He does not burst except in fables, but
He looks as if he might,
So violent his anxiety,
So exposed his nature.
His brilliant eyes look wildly out
As if the pulse were leaping from his throat.

We feel his being more, now
We have grown so vulnerable,
Have become so wholly exposed with the years
To primeval powers;
These storms are often terrible,
Followed by sudden snow.
It is alarming to feel the soul
Leap to the surface and find no sheltering wall.

Is this growth, we wonder?
But it makes us tremble
Because we are not able to conceal
The rage, the fear we feel,
Nor able to dissemble
Those claps of thunder
When we are seized and shaken beyond our will
By the secret demon or the secret angel.

To show the very pulse
Of thought alive,
Transparent as the frog whose every mood
Glows through his cold red blood,—
For whom we grieve
Because he has no walls—
Giving up pride, to endure shame and pity,
Is this a valid choice, choice of maturity?

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VERNON WATKINS

Ode at the Spring Equinox

Gone is the solstice, gone the weaning time
Of lambs. These graze the hard
Ground, and the cliff is charred,
The gorse being burnt where now I climb.
Sparse violets, shivering, break to the low sun.
Life has already, though unseen, begun,
Yet still no sign is given; the shore
Sparkles inanimate in the span
Of headlands. Fossil now and man
Speak of a death which was not here before.
It is man's fault if it is so:
His guilt has brought him low,
And where I climb and cast a shade
I bear the consequence of that,
For the mind's load is great
Which knows what menace hangs on all things made.

Icily keen the wind blows, still from the East
Driving the wrinkled tide.
All's withered on one side.
For twenty days it has not ceased
Thrusting against mankind its edge and hate.
The rock resists, borne on its own dead weight.
There the winged form of a lost age
Is fixed, defying from these rocks
The merciless equinox,
Set to annihilate life with its blind rage.
I see transposed the living sign
Linking that age to mine,
Words upon obelisk or tree,
Vessels of intricate workmanship
Thrown from a battered ship,
Strewn with the wasteful treasures of the sea.

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I mark how savagely the knife-wind blows,
Nailing me to the slope.
Out of this earth what hope
Rises with larks, or what repose
Lives on the sea or moves in seabirds' wings?
The wind starves all things and the seaspray stings
The dried-up grass. How can it serve
The lives of men? Storm bringing wood
For fires and pyres, but never food,
What can it offer but the sea-knife's curve?
And now the incurious goats go past
Crossing this charcoal waste,
Moving from bush to rockhead far below,
Feeding on all that man rejects,
Prophets the hill protects,
Lingering in shade like still unmelted snow.

Ravens return, that pair, sailing in space
Over my head, great wings:
I have watched their foragings;
And now three-quarters up the face
Of vertical rock they have perched upon a ledge
Where, ragged as a bush or blackthorn hedge,
Their nest hangs, out of reach of wave.
And there the cliff's burnt gloom
Matches the fiery wing's charred plume
Pitched above strands from many a sandy cave.
Surely the constant that I seek,
Though every hope should break,
Is balanced, hoisted to that rock's
Dangerous height, the uplifted order
Safe from the track of murder,
The streaking, vanishing form of the red fox.

Ruffled with radiance now the black silk wings
Float out, and from this verge
I see them drop, then merge
Wind's desolation, broken things,
With secret life concealed in mottled shells.

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I in predicament match them, nothing else.
How could they know as I must know,
These hasards they must overcome
Of whirlwind, thunderstorm and foam,
Are nothing but the shells from which they grow?
All is so hung that harmony,
Though pitched precariously,
Conquers uncertainty, remorse
And every flickering shaft of doubt
When the pure gift flies out
And wonders, like a spring, renews its force.

I watch, and feel the pulse of turning Earth
Now, in the forespring time,
And mark that power sublime
Which makes the passing moment worth
All unformed years lacking this present form.
See, they return, riding both sea and storm.
These they have overcome, but man,
Seizing the blind stone ignorance flings,
Himself can break this chain of wings
And, aiming, maim the loom where life began.
The immediate presence of that fear
Brings distant ages near.
Never let it be said that he,
Despising his own intellect,
Art and his whole Past wrecked,
And cast his planet's faith beneath the sea.

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JOHN HOLLANDER

Canzona: Parting on Shipboard

A bright jewelled beetle like a clump of fire
Glowed at her throat as the sun went rolling out
Over my shoulder, while an incredible
Dark colony of garnets crowning her wrist
Fell, as the deck heaved under us, to shaking.
Our hands touched. The bug blew in the wind and clung,
As if hanged in the nap of the wool she wore.

Could I have found a better jewel to buy her
Than such an insect, it might have made a shout
Of its shining with every crystal syllable
To intimate such farewells from her breast
As if to feign a sorrier forsaking
Than our impermanent parting, as she hung
Clinging about my neck, and cried and swore.

No lapidary joy of gold and wire
Clasped both our brows so intricately about,
But no mere sea-grief swelled her eyes so full
When I, uneasy lepidopterist,
Made light of the bug; when, as if by my making,
Five crystal tears splashed down her arm among
The garnets, and made them seem pismires all the more.

Their antic sparkling composed our speech entire:
Salt tears flashed within the stones. The sea without
Echoed our silence, till one shrieking gull
Stooped, of a sudden, as if at an amethyst
In the head of the beetle, and all its undertaking
Seemed aimed at that ontic bug; then the bird slung
Its body and its being towards the shore.

O bug bug bug bug bug that did require
The quietest devotions of our doubt!
At once a lump of crafted mineral
Whose crystals no reflection could resist,
And a real beetle, whose safety lay in faking
The fixity of jewels, lest some toxin-tongue
Enjoy its Janus facets to the core.

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Just then the wind blew up a little higher,
Inflaming the sunset until there was no doubt
But that departure was upon us; still,
The whistle, the irritant bell, had to insist
That the giving of gifts was done, but for our breaking:
A venomous tocsin rolled; when it had rung,
A swarm of June bees drew up in a roar.

No longer then could she and I conspire
About the bug, all bustling and devout,
To make our delaying less discernible.
A pair of antiquarians, we kissed
And clipped, then parted, querulous and quaking.
I wished her joy of the bug, at which she flung
Her jewels to the sea, to spawn upon its floor,

While in my hand remained five bright tears, wrung
Like tiny insects of sweat from every pore.

Carmen Ancillae

(Burgundy ca. 1430)

Wider than winter
Lying over the river
Or the frosty sky through the window
That stretches forever
Around the white pennants
Above the battlements;
Wider than all I remember
Is the bed in my Lady's chamber.

Whiter than my Lady
Gazing along the river
At the sunny grass where lately
Her liking had led her
Away from the remnants
Of frost on the battlements;
Whiter than was December
Was the bed in my Lady's chamber.

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Cold is the basin
I dip into the river
When the morning sun is blazing
Beyond the crisp weather.
With its cold contents
I cross the battlements.

My Lady's bed is colder,
Almost, than the river.
When we were younger
We warmed it together,
Warmer than the anger
She showed as she grew older.

Gold shines in the water
I carry from the river.
Gold given a king's daughter
Can only enrich the giver.
And what of my penance
Along the battlements—

What I bring her looks golden:
Will it avail me ever?
Today she will be married,
Clothed in gold like the river.
I have fetched and carried:
She will think of it seldom.

Black as the pearl she gave me
To tie among my tresses
Was her face as she bade them save me
Old robes and dresses
As parting presents.
I can see from the battlements
How she stands in a temper
Of tears and rage in her chamber.

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G. E. DIMOCK, JR.

The Name of Odysseus

"There is no way to stand firm on both feet and escape trouble."
Odyssey 5.413-4

IN A WAY, the whole problem of the *Odyssey* is for Odysseus to establish his identity. "After all, who knows who his father is?" says Telemachus in the first book. "My son, if he really ever existed," says Laertes in the last. To establish his identity Odysseus must live up to his name.

This is not a new idea. A nameless ancient commentator has puzzled editors by glossing *hēbēsas* in line 410 of the nineteenth book with *odyssamenos*. *Hēbēsas* means "when he has grown up," a meaning with which *odyssamenos* has nothing to do; but as we shall see, the scholiast means that for Odysseus to grow up, to achieve his full stature, will be for him to "odysseus"—to live up to the meaning of his name, whatever that may be.

"To odysseus" (*odyssasthai* in Greek) is usually said to mean "be wroth against," "hate," and to be connected with Latin *odisse*. Historically speaking, this may be true. For the *Odyssey's* poetical purposes, however, the verb denotes a more general sort of hostility, which Homer is at pains to define. In the fifth book the nymph Ino explains it as "planting evils," without specifying what sort of hostility is in the mind of the planter. It is true that Poseidon, who happens to be the planter in this case, is angry; but Zeus, who also odysseuses Odysseus, is not. In the nineteenth book Odysseus' grandfather Autolycus indicates that it is not a question of anger; asked to name the baby, he replies,

> "I have odysseused many in my time, up and down the wide world, men and women both; therefore let his name be Odysseus."

Now, all we know from the *Odyssey* about Autolycus' career is that he was the foremost liar and thief of his day. Most naturally, by "odysseusing many" he means that he has been the bane of many people's existence. The secret of his palpable success would seem to be that he has never given a sucker an even break, and he

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wants his grandson to be like him. In the career of Autolycus, and in the attitude which it implies, we are much closer to the *polytropon* "crafty" of the *Odyssey's* first line, than to the *mēnin* "wrath" of the *Iliad's*. So let us think no more of "wrath," which implies provocation and mental perturbation, but rather of a hand and mind against every man, by nature, or as a matter of policy. Autolycus' own name does not suggest "Lone Wolf" for nothing. These considerations, and others, lead me to think that in the *Odyssey odyssasthai* means essentially "to cause pain (*odynē*), and to be willing to do so." We need not draw the line between subjective and objective here, any more than we need do so in the case of the word "suffer." Where did Odysseus "suffer" the "woes" of the *Odyssey's* fourth line: "on the high seas," or "in his heart"? Just as "suffer" brings to mind both the external and internal aspects of being a victim, so "odysseus" implies subjectively and objectively what it is to persecute. For what it is worth, the seven-odd instances of the verb outside the *Odyssey* show nothing inconsistent with this meaning.

Autolycus, then, we discover in the nineteenth book, intended Odysseus to be a causer of pain. He has been one all along, of course. Perhaps the most prominent fact about him is that more than any other man he was responsible for taking Troy; and what it means to sack a city, we know from the simile at the end of book eight. Odysseus

> wept as a woman weeps when she throws her arms around the body of her beloved husband, fallen in battle before his city and his comrades, fighting to save his town and his children from disaster. She has found him gasping in the throes of death; she clings to him and lifts her voice in lamentation. But the enemy come up and belabor her back and shoulders with spears, as they lead her off into slavery and a life of miserable toil, with her cheeks wasted by her pitiful grief.[1]

Less than a hundred lines later, at the beginning of his tale, Odysseus will say,

> The same wind as wafted me from Ilium brought me to Ismarus, the city of the Cicones; I sacked the place and killed the men; their wives, together with much booty, we took out of the city and divided up.

[1] This quotation is from E. V. Rieu's excellent translation. So, in whole or in part, are many of the passages which follow.

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As has been well observed, the Sack of Ismarus is the Sack of Troy in its predatory essentials, with the glamor stripped off. This attitude Odysseus will maintain to the end. "The cattle which the suitors have consumed," he says in the twenty-third book, "I will for the most part make up by raiding on my own; the Achaeans will give others." Perhaps worse than this, Odysseus' going to Troy caused Telemachus grievous mental suffering, wasted Penelope's nights in tears, and reduced Laertes, his father, to misery and squalor; his absence killed his mother, Antikleia.

So conceived, Odysseus is not an attractive character. In fact the poem implies a good deal of criticism of the Autolycan attitude. As Mr. H. N. Porter once pointed out to me, one of the first things we hear about the hero is his predilection for poisoned arrows. Athene, disguised as Mentes, tells Telemachus,

> He was on his way from Ephyre, where he had stayed with Ilus Mermerides—he went there in his fast ship to get a mortal poison to smear his bronze-tipped arrows with. Ilus wouldn't give it to him in fear of the eternal gods. But my father [Zeus?] gave him some. He was terribly fond of him.

Much better, one would think, for Autolycus to have adopted Eurycleia's suggestion of Polyaretus as a name for the baby: "He's our 'Answer to Prayer' (*polyarētos*)," she remarked as she put the child on his grandfather's lap. But Autolycus preferred a name that most would regard as ill-omened.

For in spite of the fact that Odysseus is so obviously a causer of pain, the name which Autolycus wished on him strikes one as ironical. Up to the nineteenth book, Odysseus has been referred to as odysseused rather than odysseusing: "Why do you odysseus him so, Zeus?" Athene asks, before the poem is well under way; Ino and Odysseus both say that Poseidon is odysseusing him; finally, as we read the Autolycus passage, we are aware that Odysseus has just told Penelope that Zeus and the Sun-god odysseused her husband. In the *Odyssey's* proem itself, the hero seems essentially the sufferer: he is the *polytropos* man, the Autolycan rogue who treats the world as his enemy, but who sacks Troy only to be driven far astray thereafter, and take a beating. In the process, we are told, he is to win his *psychē*, which means loosely his life, and more properly the image of life after the liver is gone—in

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other words something very like identity—but the whole business seems unpleasant, to say the least.

To understand the satisfaction involved in injuring and suffering and the connection between them, we must return to the nineteenth book and the scholiast's note. The giving of the name is coupled with the adventure in which Odysseus first lives up to it. *Hēbēsas* is in fact *odyssamenos*. "When he has grown up," the hero, as though undergoing an initiation, wins Autolycus' favor and recognition by going on a boar hunt; as causer of pain he kills the boar; as sufferer he is slashed by it, thus acquiring the scar important in identifying him later. The pain given and received results in joy:

> Autolycus and the sons of Autolycus
> Efficiently healed him and loaded him with presents;
> Rejoicing they dispatched him rejoicing to his beloved
> Ithaca. His father and his good mother
> Rejoiced at his return, and asked for each particular
> Of how he got his scar.

The suffering results from the doing, and is inseparable from it in the recognition and satisfaction produced by this exploit. Not simply "how he killed the boar" but "how he got his scar," is for Odysseus' parents the measure of their son.

To be Odysseus, then, is to adopt the attitude of the hunter of dangerous game: to deliberately expose one's self, but thereafter to take every advantage that the exposed position admits; the immediate purpose is injury, but the ultimate purpose is recognition and the sense of a great exploit. Odysseus killed a boar to win his name; he went to Troy to enlarge it; in order to keep it, he will presently kill 108 suitors in as cold blood as he can manage.

In the adventure with the Cyclops, Odysseus inflicts pain in order to identify himself, and in so doing challenges the hostility of the universe. Polyphemus' pain is obvious. Even Euripides could not have dwelt more explicitly than Homer on the boring of the red-hot stake into the great eyeball, the sizzling of the eye's fluid, and the crackling of its roots. By virtue of this deed of horror, Odysseus, until now *Outis* "nobody" as far as Polyphemus is concerned, puts himself in a position where he can tell the monster who he is, can cry his name aloud to the Cyclops' face. This cry of defiance is thought to be foolish of the wily Odysseus, no less

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by his crew than by the critics, but it is in reality, like the boar hunt, a case of deliberate self-exposure for the purpose of being somebody rather than nobody.

To blind the son of Poseidon, and then to defy him, is both to challenge nature to do her worst, and to demonstrate her ultimate impotence to crush human identity. It is challenging nature in the sense that the sailor does, every time he goes to sea. The hero's colonizing eye as he approaches the Cyclopes' island, the remark that they have no ships or shipwrights, the shipbuilding technique employed in blinding Polyphemus and the mention of axe, adze and auger, the tools which enabled Odysseus to leave Kalypso and set sail on his raft, all this sounds very much as though Odysseus' crime against Poseidon were the crime of all those who go down to the sea in ships. But Poseidon will not get his revenge. In the *Odyssey* navigation is a practical possibility; the elements are conquered. So to blind Polyphemus is to convict savage nature of impotence and blindness. She is indiscriminate in her blows. Her most hostile efforts, like the rocks thrown by Polyphemus, are as likely to wash the hero to safety as they are to drive him into danger. Thus the power of the elements does not render Odysseus' identity meaningless. Rather he makes sense, and the elements do not. This, I think, is the significance of the general assumption in the *Odyssey* that Poseidon will give Odysseus his bellyful of trouble before he reaches his home, but will not kill him.

Polyphemus and Poseidon, however, are more than the hostility of inanimate nature. There is no "inanimate nature" in Homer anyway. They prefigure all the overt savagery which the universe presents, human and divine. This savagery is as able to breach the conventions, hospitality and the rest, among the civilized suitors in Ithaca, or the hypercivilized Phaeacians (remember Euryalus), as it is among the cannibal Laestrygons, or among the Cyclopes. If Poseidon and Polyphemus are the hostile aspects of this world, it is not foolish for Odysseus to cry his name in defiance of them, and so be subject to Polyphemus' rock-slinging and his curse; or rather, the foolishness or good sense of the action is not the point. To pass from the darkness of the cave into the light, to pass from being "nobody" to having a name, is to be born. But to be born is to cast one's name in the teeth of a hostile universe; it is to incur the enmity of Poseidon. In such a world, what better name could

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be found than Odysseus, "Trouble"? ("Trouble" is perhaps as good a translation of Odysseus' name as any. When a character in a western movie says, "Just call me Trouble, stranger," we take him to be a hostile type who makes trouble for other people, and so presumably for himself also.)

That braving Polyphemus is being born is not my metaphor; it is Homer's. In the nineteenth book Odysseus hints to Penelope that her husband has undergone a birth somewhere overseas:

> He put in at Amnisus, where the cave of Eileithuia is, in a difficult harbor; he barely escaped the gales.

Eileithuia is goddess of childbirth. But in the nineteenth book this is merely a way of reminding us of the Polyphemus adventure and possibly of Kalypso as well. In the ninth book, as Polyphemus is in the act of rolling the stone from the mouth of the cave, we are told of his anguish for the second time. We already know how his eye hurts, but this time we hear that he is "travailing in pain"; *ōdinōn odynēsi* are the words used. Whether or not we hear in them the name of Odysseus, we should not fail to reflect that *ōdinō* means essentially "to be in labor of childbirth." We are born for trouble, the adventure of the Cyclops implies, yet to stay in the womb is to remain nobody. There is security of a sort in being nobody, but as the Cyclops promises, Nobody will be devoured in the end, though last of all.

For there are more insidious threats to identity in the *Odyssey* than those which Polyphemus represents, the dangers and sufferings consequent upon taking on the world as one's enemy. Trouble is difficult and dangerous, but it can lead to identity. Security, on the other hand, is inevitable oblivion. The narrative proper of the *Odyssey* begins as follows:

> By now all the others, as many as had escaped sheer destruction, were at home. Odysseus, alone of all, wanting his home and his wife, a queenly nymph held prisoner, Kalypso, divine goddess, in her hollow cave, begging him to be her husband.

This is the state of affairs which the fifth book will develop. He wants home and a wife. He has a cave and a goddess. Why do all the gods but one pity him for this? Odysseus has realized the tired soldier's or sailor's dream, an immortality of comfort and physical

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satisfaction, with no troubles. But Odysseus would rather die, as Athene says. Everybody sees this paradox and understands the flaw in this paradise: such an existence has no meaning. But it adds something, I think, to see life on Ogygia in terms of identity and nonentity. Kalypso is oblivion. Her name suggests cover and concealment, or engulfing; she lives "in the midst of the sea"—the middle of nowhere, as Hermes almost remarks—and the whole struggle of the fifth book, indeed of the entire poem, is not to be engulfed by that sea. When the third great wave of book five breaks over Odysseus' head, Homer's words are: *ton de mega kyma kalypsen*—"and the great wave engulfed him." If this wave had drowned him, it would have been a "vile death," surely, as Odysseus remarks at the beginning of the storm. Much better, he says, to have died where "the spears flew thickest" at Troy; then he would have had "recognition," *kleos*. People would know about him and his death. Odysseus does not wish he were back with Kalypso. Though she offered immortality, not death—an immortality of security and satisfaction in a charming cave—it is still an immortality of oblivion, of no *kleos*, of nonentity. Leaving Kalypso is very like leaving the perfect security and satisfaction of the womb; but, as the Cyclops reminds us, the womb is after all a deadly place. In the womb one has no identity, no existence worthy of a name. Nonentity and identity are in fact the poles between which the actors in the poem move. It is a choice between Scylla and Charybdis—to face deliberately certain trouble from the jaws of the six-headed goddess, or to be engulfed entirely by the maelstrom. One must odysseus and be odysseused, or else be kalypsoed.

Odysseus did not always live up to his name. There was one occasion when oblivion seemed almost preferable to trouble. His name seemed to have lost its magic. Hence his failure with the Laestrygonians, and the necessity of winning back his identity in the Circe episode.

While we remember Polyphemus ("Much-fame") in connection with Odysseus, we are very apt to forget Antiphates ("Against-renown"), the Laestrygonian king. In the Laestrygonian affair Odysseus himself avoids the encounter, and loses his whole fleet. In this, his least creditable adventure, he never makes his identity

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felt. The Laestrygonians don't know who he is, or care. Yet Odysseus survives. With poetic rather than nautical logic, he escapes by virtue of having left his ship in an exposed position, while the rest of the fleet trusts itself to the security of the fiord and is lost.

Odysseus in the land of the Laestrygonians is not the Odysseus whom we saw with the Cyclops, though in both cases he has to do with cannibal giants. Avoiding the encounter here is perhaps as sensible as avoiding the Planctae, but there are other reasons why Odysseus is not up to it. In the interim, as we have said, his name has lost its magic. "Trouble," intended to mean success, has seemed to be failure. Aeolus has listened with interest to the tale of prowess at Troy and has sent Odysseus on his way, insuring that he will have, for once, a remarkably painless trip. But in sight of the goal, trouble strikes. Aeolus, seeing in this a sign that heaven is inveterately hostile to Odysseus, banishes him from his sight. Such trouble means to Aeolus not identity, but oblivion. Odysseus himself has nearly reached a similar conclusion. Since leaving Troy he has sacked Ismarus in characteristically ruthless fashion and rejected the passive peace of Lotos-land. By handling the situation in a manner worthy of Autolycus, he has been able to cry his name in defiance of Polyphemus. He has come within sight of his home. He has done all this only to find his achievement undone at the first relaxation of his mistrustful watchfulness. Small wonder that success on these terms should seem impossible. As the winds sped Odysseus out of sight of Ithaca, "I debated," he says, "whether to leap from my ship and end it all in the sea" (embracing thus the "vile death" of the Kalypso episode), "or whether to bear my misery and remain among the living." He adopts a sort of compromise: "I endured and I remained; *kalypsamenos* I lay in my ship," he puts it, meaning that he had wrapped his head in his cloak. This is the Odysseus who fails to confront Antiphates.

After the discouragement of the Aeolus episode, it is natural that life's difficulties should appear as insuperable as the Laestrygonians; but Odysseus will find the courage to go on. After the Laestrygonian experience his depression is shared by his men. Two days they all lie in weariness and woe on Circe's beach. But against this sea of troubles Odysseus takes arms, a spear and a

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sword. As he once killed a boar, he now kills a stag. This puts heart in Odysseus' men: "dis-kalypsoed" (*ek de kalypsamenoi*) they revive. Odysseus now makes a remarkable speech:

> Friends, we don't know where the darkness is, or where the dawn; where the sun that shines for mortals rises, or where it sets. Still let us quickly consider whether any resource can still be found. I for one don't think so.

The point, as Odysseus goes on to suggest, is whether they must indeed make themselves known and ask the inhabitants of the island for their route, perilous though it has proved to confront Polyphemus and Antiphates. In other words, shall they turn their backs on the comparative security of their present oblivion? Characteristically, this wider implication is stressed by a pun—a blatant pun which has been used before, in the Cyclops passage. "Whether any resource can still be found," sounds in Greek almost precisely like "Whether any of us is going to go on being nobody." "I for one don't think so," is Odysseus' comment. They have been "nobody" for some time, in fact ever since Aeolus refused to recognize their claims as human beings. This cannot go on, as the pun implies. The time has come when Odysseus must stand and be recognized.

Without taking account of the pun, critics have interpreted this passage as Odysseus at the end of his human resources, about to apply for divine aid. The moly plant, soon to be granted, becomes for them almost a symbol of grace. This is fair enough in its way. Identity in the Odyssey is in some sense a gift of the gods. But "from the gods who sit in grandeur, grace comes somehow violent."[2] Odysseus doesn't pray for grace; he exacts it, first by killing the stag and then by threatening Circe and forcing her to swear to do him no harm. Hermes, Autolycus' patron, puts him up to the threatening, but it is quite in accord with Odysseus' name and nature anyhow. We remember the oaths exacted from Helen and Kalypso. In the present instance Odysseus remains nobody, a denatured wolf or lion like Circe's other victims, until sword to throat, he makes her recognize him and speak his name. Prior to this, despite the introductory formula "he took my hand and spoke my name," Hermes had not named the hero; he only named his passive aspect, *O dystēne* "poor wretch." But with the gift of moly, "black at the root, but with a flower like milk," Hermes

[2] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 182-3 (Lattimore's translation).

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seems to restore the magic of the name of Odysseus. However black its first effects, it will ultimately flower with balm and solace. Though she "struck [him] with her rod and named" him, Circe gives Odysseus no name at all until the hero seems "like one eager to kill her"; once having recognized him as "Odysseus *polytropos*" however, she uses his name every chance she gets, four times with full titles: "Zeus-sprung son of Laertes, expedient Odysseus." By choosing to live up to his name with Circe, Odysseus restored its magic; he had to in order to get anywhere, and so to be anybody, at all.

For Odysseus to choose to pursue the path of his painful identity as he did on Circe's beach, is to win power over, and recognition from, that ambiguous daughter of Sun, the life-giver, and Ocean, the all-engulfing. It is also to accept pain as the only real basis of meaning in this life or the next. This is the secret of Teiresias.

To achieve the goal of recognition and identity, and to learn the secrets of the abyss, are equally to row upon the sea of trouble. This is the meaning of the apparently witless question, "What ship brought you to Ithaca, for I do not think you came on foot," and of Antikleia's first words to her son in the underworld:

> My child, how did you come beneath the misty dark, alive as you are? It is hard for the living to get a sight of all this. For in between are great rivers and dreadful streams, first Ocean, which there is no way to cross on foot, if one does not have a well-built ship.

But with Aeolus the question arose, is such sea-faring endurable? To ask this question is "to enquire of Teiresias" (*Teiresiēs* in Homer); for Teiresias' name is the weariness of rowing. "*TEIReto d' andrōn thymos hyp' EIRESIĒS alegeinēs*," Odysseus says of his crew after Aeolus denied them: "*Worn* was my men's spirit by the woeful *rowing*." To enquire of Teiresias is to ask the meaning of trouble.

This is why Odysseus is not so much interested in what the prophet has to say of the troubled future—"You seek homecoming sweet as honey, noble Odysseus; heaven will make it hard for you"—as he is in recognition, in the meaning of his own painful and pain-producing existence:

> Doubtless the gods had all that in store for me. But tell me: I see here the shade of my dead mother; she sits in silence near the blood,

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> and has not the strength to look her son in the face or speak to him. Tell me, lord, how might she recognize the man I am?

His mother's recognition contains a blow. It was Odysseus' sweet nature, she says, that killed her. Thus it appears that even in his gentlest aspect, Odysseus gives pain. He is, after all, soft as well as hard. The predatory brooch, dog throttling fawn, pinned on him by Penelope as he left for Troy, is coupled with a second mark of identification, equally important: the shirt which gleamed on his body

> like the skin of a dried onion—so gentle it was to the touch, and at the same time bright, like the sun; many were the women who admired it.

Yet Odysseus' soft side can be as painful, or as fatal, as his hardness. The love, not the hate he inspired, killed the dog Argus and wasted Penelope's nights in tears. Antikleia recognized at least part of her son's nature by dying for the love of him.

Agamemnon, dead by no sweet nature, but rather by the treacherous hand of his wife, also recognizes Odysseus; despite Penelope's virtue, he had better not, Agamemnon thinks in contrast to Antikleia, tell his wife everything. Neither of these recognitions, neither the first, evoking the hero's sweetness, nor the second, calling upon his guile, can bring Odysseus much comfort as to the value of life as Trouble. Achilles on the other hand makes it clear that it is something to be alive at all, and furthermore his concern for his son's prowess reminds us that Telemachus too, promises to become a credit to his father. Still, neither simple existence, nor existence continued through a worthy son, is of the essence. Ajax' silence, though eloquently expressive of the power of Odysseus as injurer, is discouraging; but the climax of recognition is reached when Heracles, whose "seeming" is hell's own picture of hostile ferocity, but whose reality "dwells in bliss among the immortals," equates Odysseus to himself:

> One look was enough to tell Heracles who I was, and he greeted me in mournful tones. "Zeus-sprung son of Laertes, expedient Odysseus —unhappy man! So you too are working out some such miserable doom as I was slave to when the sun shone over my head. Son of Zeus though I was, unending troubles came my way. . . . a master far beneath my rank . . . sent me down here to bring away the Hound of Hell. And under the guiding hands of Hermes and bright-eyed

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Athene, I did succeed in capturing him and I dragged him out of Hades realm."

Not just Heracles, but all these people (except Ajax) explicitly recognize Odysseus; still excepting Ajax, all but Antikleia, who appropriately calls him "my child," use Odysseus' full titles. Each sees him differently, and to a greater or less degree, truly. To all of them he means, in one way or another, pain. To Antikleia he is the pain of a lost child; Agamemnon connects him with the pain and betrayal that marriage may bring; Achilles is reminded of the ultimate pain of being dead, Ajax of wounded honor. Heracles sees in him the "unending troubles" of life under the sun. For the secret of life which Odysseus has come to the realms of the dead to discover is the necessity of pain, and its value. The generations of woman ("and each proclaimed her bringing-forth") may be for good or ill, involving Zeus or Poseidon indifferently. Man's fate may seem to be Tantalus' endless craving, never satisfied; or Sisyphus' endless striving, never successful; life's basis may even be Tityus' vultures, a great gnawing in a great belly, as Odysseus several times suggests (7.216-21; 15.343-4; 17.286-9; 18.53-4). Yet Minos continues to pass his judgments, and Orion to pursue his quarry. Heracles has his heavenly, as well as his hellish aspect—and so does Odysseus, "Trouble." Ajax feels only Odysseus' hellish side, but Heracles implies that a life of pain, given and received, snatches something from Death himself. This is the secret of Teiresias, the answer to the weariness of rowing. To know himself as Trouble, and to be so known by others, is the only way for Odysseus to possess his identity.

There is no human identity in other terms than pain. To escape Kalypso, Odysseus needs a ship (4.559-60, 5.16-7), and so must accept the weariness of rowing. To see life in any other way is to live in a dream-world, as the Cyclopes do, and the Phaeacians. To avoid trouble, the Phaeacians withdrew, we are told, from their ancestral conflict with the Cyclopes. The conflict is indeed ancestral, for the Cyclopes are as savage as the Phaeacians are civilized; but both are out of touch with reality. Polyphemus thinks he can act with impunity, "for we are much mightier than the gods," but he succumbs to Trouble in the shape of a clever "weakling" and a skin of wine. The Phaeacians on the contrary trust in their piety. Nausicaa thinks that no one could possibly

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come "bringing enmity, for we are dear to the gods." This she says of Odysseus, Enmity himself. To her, he is either an object of pity or a dream come true:

> Doubtless she has picked up some castaway from his ship [she thinks of someone as remarking of her], a foreign man, since there is nobody like that nearby [or "those nearby are nobodies"], or else in answer to her hopes a god, long prayed-for (*polyarētos*), has come down from heaven to keep her all her days.

Eurycleia's "Polyaretus" fits Odysseus in the sense that his return to Ithaca in his hostile might is something to pray for, but he is not what Nausicaa would pray that he be. Nausicaa is victimized by her too trusting love for him, and his visit is ultimately disastrous for her people. The *Odyssey* has its dream-worlds, and, "near to the gods," Scheria is one of them. Its queen, "whose name is Prayed-for" (*Arētē d'onom' estin epōnymon*), suggests her antonym, Odysseus, who, the poem later tells us, might have been Polyaretus, but was not. "So let his name be Trouble" (*to d' Odysseus onom' estin epōnymon*), Autolycus will say in the nineteenth book.

Odysseus no more can exist in the dream-world of Alcinous and Arete, where woman rules man and rowing is no trouble, than he can with Kalypso. In a world without trouble love must be as little serious as the affair of Ares and Aphrodite. With Nausicaa there is no scope for the relationship which Odysseus describes to her:

> There is nothing nobler or more admirable than when two people who see eye to eye keep house as man and wife, *confounding their enemies* and delighting their friends, as they themselves know better than anyone.

How can love be really felt, without pain? Therefore, after arriving exhausted, naked, and unknown on Scheria, Odysseus must somehow so impress the inhabitants that they will send him on his way, neither killing him as enemy nor overmuch befriending him and settling him down with Nausicaa. This he accomplishes primarily by means of his well-advertised Tale of Woe. It is received with mingled horror and fascination. Avid for its miseries the Phaeacians certainly are. This supports our impression that their dream-world, lacking pain, is human life *manqué*. On the

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other hand, after the simile of the woman led into captivity, it is easy to assume Phaeacian feelings of horror at Odysseus' brutal account of the Sack of Ismarus. The recognition accorded the tale is equivocal: "Phaeacians," Arete asks during the intermission, "what do you think of this man, his size and strength and wit?" A dubious answer is implied in Alcinous' polite comment:

> O Odysseus, when we look at you we don't find you a bit like a liar and thief, [or "your *Outis* looks to us like a liar and thief"] such as the black earth produces in such far-flung numbers—thieves piling lie on lie, and where they get them all from nobody knows; your words are charming, there is good sense in them, and you tell your story as skillfully as a bard, the grim sufferings of yourself and all the Argives.

After all Odysseus has shown himself to be a pirate, and it is worth noting that Alcinous' remarks occur half-way through the story of the underworld, before the value of pain is established. But for the Phaeacians this is never established. Their rowing is without drudgery, for all their sea-faring. At the end of the tale Alcinous will tell the guest he once thought of as a son-in-law that he is sure he will never come back. One doesn't quite know whether the Phaeacians are bestowing on Odysseus more wealth than he won at Troy in recognition of his exploits, or as an invitation to leave the country; for it was Odysseus' stated willingness to stay a year that brought forth Alcinous' remarks about liars and thieves. In Odysseus the Phaeacians enjoy Trouble vicariously, but ultimately dismiss him. We may be pretty sure that, for their "painless escorting of strangers," Poseidon's threat to "surround (*amphikalypsai*) their city with mountains" will come off. Just as he turned their ship to stone, he will bar them from the sea, and therefore from any chance of future identity. The price of no trouble is oblivion.

Teiresias implies three modes of pain: first, pain administered, like the slaying of the boar and stag, or the blinding of Polyphemus. Odysseus, Teiresias predicts, will kill the suitors. Second, there is the pain of the resisted impulse. Odysseus must restrain his predatory impulses when he comes upon the cattle of the Sun. Third, to plant the oar, the symbol of the weariness of rowing, among those "who do not know the sea, nor eat their food mixed with salt, nor know of red-prowed ships, nor balanced oars, which

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are a vessel's wings" is to introduce the idea of trouble to those who, like the Phaeacians, are not sufficiently aware of it. In establishing his identity, Odysseus must use these three modes of pain.

It is sufficiently clear how administering pain by killing the suitors and threatening their kinsmen with annihilation serves to establish Odysseus in Ithaca. The second mode is subtler. It would seem a denial of Odysseus' name for him to boggle at a little cattle-rustling. That he does so leads some to suppose that his adventures are intended to purge him of the brutalizing effects of the Trojan campaign and bring him home readjusted to civilian life. But the temptation of the cattle of the Sun is more like the temptation of the Lotos than like the Sack of Ismarus. It is a temptation not to crime but to oblivion. To fall for it is the typical weakness of the "innocent" crew, as the proem suggests. Faced with the Planctae, the Reefs of Hard Knocks, they drop their oars. Knowing the mortal danger in eating the Sun's cattle, they do not know it thoroughly enough to forego the immediate satisfaction of eating when they are hungry. Forgetful of homecoming and identity itself, they eat. Of all that band only Odysseus can resist such impulses and hang on interminably, as he does clinging to the fig tree above Charybdis, refusing to drop and be comfortably engulfed.

Odysseus is a master of the delayed response, of the long way round, of the resisted impulse. That is the reason he is able to keep his identity intact. It is courting oblivion to rush blindly into love, as Nausicaa did, and as Penelope, even when reunited with her husband, did not. In Circe's bed, Odysseus would have become just another denatured wolf or lion, if he had not first with a show of hostility made sure of his integrity. As in love, so with eating. Man is a predatory animal; to eat he must kill; but he must know what he is doing. He must not, like the crew and the suitors, take life as a table spread before him, insufficiently aware of the presence of enemies.

He must not even take life as a song, though the episode of the Sirens suggests that this is the most irresistible of impulses. The Phaeacians are certainly not proof against it. Alcinous may think that the meaning of life's pain is that

> the gods were responsible for that, weaving catastrophe into the pattern of events to make a song for future generations,

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but pain must be experienced, not just enjoyed as after-dinner entertainment. Therefore the Phaeacians are victimized by Odysseus' Tale of Woe. Odysseus on the other hand is proof against the Sirens and their singing of "all things that happen on this fruitful earth," just as he is against the Lotos and against Circe. He is steadfast in enduring Teiresias' second mode of pain, the pain of the resisted impulse.

"The steadfast," says a priest in *Murder in the Cathedral*, "can manipulate the greed and lust of others, the feeble is devoured by his own." This leads us from the second mode of pain to the third—introducing the idea of trouble to those insufficiently aware of it. Odysseus in his steadfastness knows the pain of the thirst for life, the danger it leads to, and the trouble involved in successfully gratifying it. He knows it so well ("he saw the cities of many men, and knew their mind"), that he can use this knowledge in manipulating others, for the purpose of getting himself recognized as Trouble. One picture of this is Odysseus in the underworld, sword in hand, controlling the access of the ghosts to the blood. Manipulating the Phaeacians chiefly through their itching ears, he introduces himself to them as Trouble, and wins survival and homecoming. In the second half of the poem, using his lying tales, his wife, and the good things of his house as bait, he maneuvers the upholders and the defilers of his household alike into a position where, bow in hand and arrow on string, like Heracles in the underworld, he can make himself really felt.

For Odysseus to establish his identity at home, manipulation is necessary, manipulation even of those who favor him. It is difficult to get people to accept pain. Even the suitors do not dispute that he was a good king; unfortunately this is not enough to maintain his position in Ithaca. He must get both his pleasant and his hostile aspect recognized at the same time. When they finally are, near the end of the last book, this is signalized by the curious salutation of Dolius, the last to join forces with him: *oule te kai mala chaire*, he says, "hail and rejoice!" But *oule* is an exceedingly rare word, and its auditory suggestions of *oulos* "baneful," and *oulē*, the famous scar, will be felt—something like "Bane and Weal!" For the scar which the boar gave him is in particular the mark of Odysseus as Trouble. Antikleia ("Opposed-to-fame"), in her recognition of her son in the underworld,

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did not seem to understand the scar's full meaning, but it is easy for Eurycleia ("Far-fame") to accept it. After touching the scar as she washed his feet,

> joy and pain seized upon Eurycleia at the same time; her eyes filled with tears, and the voice caught in her throat. Touching his chin she said to Odysseus: "Surely you are Odysseus, dear child—and I didn't know my master until I had felt all of him!"

Eurycleia knows both aspects. It is she who has to be restrained from howling in triumph over the dead suitors. Telemachus is not much of a problem either. "I am no god;" Odysseus says, "Why do you think I am an immortal? No, I am your father, for whom you groan and suffer so much pain, accepting the insults of your fellows." Telemachus' difficulty is to determine whether Trouble is a miserable wretch in filthy rags or a very god for splendor. We have met this ambiguity before in the double nature of Heracles.

Penelope's recognition is harder to win. She knows Odysseus' soft garment, and her own hands pinned on him the badge of the dog and fawn; but the predatory side of him she cannot accept. Troy is to her not a great and necessary exploit, but something he merely "went to see," and for this she cannot forgive him. To her Troy is not a source of renown, but "Evil Ilium, not to be named." If Odysseus' manipulation, or his knowledge of the mind of man ever fails, it is with her. In their false-recognition scene, his riddle-name is *Aithōn*, the "blaze" which melts her (19.204-9) but which she cannot face (19.478). In spite of all the help her disguised husband can give her, she reacts to her dream of the eagle, Odysseus, killing her geese, the suitors, not by preparing for his "return," but by deciding, at last, to give him up for good. After the suitors are dead, and Odysseus has had his bath, she still holds out. Even the appeal to her desire as a woman, effective though it was with Kalypso, Nausicaa, and Circe, doesn't work; Odysseus, it appears, will have to sleep alone. In exasperation he asks who moved his bed. In spite of all he has done to make permanent their marriage and the symbol of it, he still cannot tell, he admits, "whether it still stands or whether by now someone has moved it elsewhere, and cut through the trunk of the olive." By this bed and by this exasperation she

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knows him; flinging her arms around his neck, "Odysseus, don't scold me," she cries, giving him his true name at last. Later, she will accept trouble in more detail. The "immeasurable toil" still to come, none other than the planting of Teiresias 'oar, she elects to hear of immediately, though in the first book, after ten years, she could not bear to hear the bard singing of the return from Troy. In the end she takes delight in hearing "all the woes Zeus-sprung Odysseus inflicted on others, and all he himself toiled and suffered." She has accepted the meaning of the name of Odysseus.

Teiresias implied that to win identity one must administer pain, resist all impulses to ignore it, and plant the idea of it in the minds of others. Hence the curious behaviour of the hero in making himself known to Laertes. Checking his own tears and resisting the impulse to "kiss his father and embrace him, and tell him all, how he had come and was back at home," Odysseus instead teases the suffering old man with the pain of the loss of his son. This is the pain which killed Antikleia, but it now serves to make clear to Laertes and Odysseus what they mean to each other.

Laertes knows Odysseus by his scar, but also by some fruit trees, given to Odysseus as a boy, which the old man is still tending for him. There is something obviously fruitful in the pain of this relationship between father and son, and the sense of the boar-hunt exploit is there too, especially when later the old man delights to see "son and grandson vying in prowess" in the fight with the suitors' kinsmen. The fruitfulness of trouble has been hinted all along, particularly by the image of the olive. There is the double olive thicket which shelters the hero, naked and alone on Scheria; the green olive stake which puts out Polyphemus' eye; and notably the great olive trunk which makes one corner of Odysseus' bed. The recurrent phrase, *kaka phyteuein* "to plant evils," points to the same fruitfulness. Therefore we can be sure that the life of pain contemplated in the *Odyssey* is fruitful, not sadistic. The ultimate object is recognition and the sense of one's own existence, not the pain itself. The pain necessary to win recognition may be as slight as the show of anger to Penelope, or as great as the blinding of Polyphemus, but in some degree pain will be necessary. Nothing less than the death of 108 suitors (to say nothing of the faithless maids), and the readiness to kill the

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suitors' kinsmen, will get Odysseus recognized in Ithaca. Once recognition is achieved, however, pain is pointless. At the very end of the poem, Odysseus "swooping like an eagle" on the fleeing ranks of the suitors' adherents, "might have killed them all." Then, "Zeus-sprung son of Laertes, expedient Odysseus, stop!" Athene cries, ". . . lest Zeus be angry at you." The daughter of Zeus herself, as Circe and others have done before her, now hails Odysseus with the rolling epithets of his full titles. Killing beyond the point of this recognition would anger Zeus, would violate the nature of things. But has Zeus not been angry all along at the hero "who received so many buffets, once he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy?" No. The universe is full of hostility, it includes Poseidon, but it is not ultimately hostile. Zeus has been showing Odysseus not anger, but a terrible fondness, to echo Athene's words quoted early in this paper.

It is thus that the *Odyssey* solves the problem of evil, which it raised at line 62 of the first book. "Excessive suffering," says Zeus, or words to that effect, "is due to folly." "So it is," replies Athene; "but what about Odysseus? Why do you odysseus him so, Zeus?" It is a good question; Zeus admits that Odysseus is the wisest of mankind; yet he permits Poseidon to persecute him. It is a good question, and it contains its own answer. In exposing Odysseus to Poseidon, in allowing him to do and suffer, Zeus is odysseusing Odysseus, giving him his identity. In accepting the implications of his name, Trouble, Odysseus establishes his identity in harmony with the nature of things. In the ultimate sense he is "Zeus-sprung," one whose existence is rooted in life itself.

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HAROLD NORSE

Translations from G. G. Belli

Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli was born 1791, died 1863. He wrote sonnets in the Roman vernacular, never published during his lifetime. Among Italian and other cognoscenti, *ranked with Leopardi, next to Dante. He has never before appeared in translation. Gogol, the Russian novelist, met him and heard him recite, proclaiming him one of the greatest poets of any age. Ste.-Beuve wrote about "this Belli, so utterly unknown . . . [who] writes sonnets in the dialect of Trastevere, but sonnets in sequence and forming a poem. He is original, witty in everything, but best of all in his artist's eye; it seems really that he is a* great *poet, penetrated with Roman life. . . ." He was much admired by James Joyce, who recognized in his work "a heightening and compacting of language values enough to account for Joyce's enthusiasm and with no parallel in the novel before* Finnegans Wake. . . ."—*as Eleanor Clark writes in her perceptive essay on Belli in* Rome and a Villa, *to date the only serious treatment of Belli in English. There are 2,279 sonnets, most of them written in the decade between 1830-1840, when Belli was in his forties. They were written under the tyrannical government of the Papal State, and a large part of them are directed against the vices of Pope and clergy. But Belli was a man of enormous contradictions, profoundly Catholic, torn between adherence to and rebellion against the Church. In the last fifteen years of his life, after he had ceased writing the sonnets, he was a fierce advocate of all Church policies and, indeed, supported the most reactionary measures. He turned against his anti-papal sonnets and on his death-bed, begged his confessor, Cardinal Tizzani, to burn them; but it was through the Cardinal himself that they were preserved, and later printed. In spite of the savage satire, the mocking* Pasquinade, *the fundamental greatness of his work lies in the compassion for human suffering which is expressed under a mask of humor and irony. The language is that of the people, coarse, vulgar and obscene, for they are monologues and dialogues from the mouth of the people; but Belli wrote with consummate mastery of form and verbal skills, and*

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exhibits a novelist's range in his subjects, as well as in his mastery of the psychological and dramatic. Miss Clark notes a strong resemblance between his work and that of his admirer, Gogol. It should be noted, also, that two other novelists bear a striking resemblance to Belli: Rabelais and Joyce, not only in their stylistic approach, but also in their relation to Catholic Christianity, for in all three writers the early Church training stayed with them for life. "Francois Rabelais, like all true satirists, was more than half in love with the objects of his satire," writes Prof. J. M. Cohen, in the Introduction to his recent translation of Rabelais in the Penguin Classics. And he might also have said it of Belli.

I have chosen, in these translations, to import into our poetry two things which I think it could use at the moment: an unafraid, colloquial, racy diction, and a narrative style both passionate and humorous. I hope to have succeeded in carrying over Belli's huge satire and colloquial strength. In translating from one language to another, the problems in poetry are so vast, that the translator must choose to bring over certain qualities at the expense of others —since Belli makes use of a special vernacular, almost a dialect, I have relied on my ear for the American vernacular, as the proper vehicle. I know of no better equivalent of Belli's romanesco *than the typical New-Yorkese we hear from the mouths of hack drivers, from hallway conversations in tenement houses, from bars and street-corners, and so on. I have, wherever possible, rhymed and kept to literal meanings, taking liberties and making such changes as I thought would heighten the original intention. Where rhyme would have altered the meaning-structure too much, I have omitted it. And where I felt the meaning would gain by a lesser degree of vernacular usage (since English presents here insuperable problems) I have been content to suggest a colloquial tone rather than consistently imitate vulgar speech through orthography. I have tried to make these translations independent English poems.*

—H. N.

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JUDGMENT DAY

Four archangels with trumpets at their lips
Will take their places, each in his corner, and blow:
Then, in a terrible voice, they'll all begin
To say: "Step up, everyone! Let's go!"

Then will ooze up out of the earth a slime
Of skeletons, crawling on all fours,
To put on the shapes of human beings again
—A helpless brood around a mother hen.

This mother hen will be the blessèd God
Who'll separate them into black and white:
One part for the cellar, one for the roof.

At the end, a bell-collar of angels
Will appear, and, as if everyone
Were off to bed, they'll turn out the lights. Good night!

DEATH WITH A TAIL

There's no way out: either we're *jacobins*
Or else we believe the Law of the Lord.
If we believe, plain guys or fancy pants,
Death is a step that freezes every sort.

You run to plays, to parties, to a show,
You go to the bars and taverns, you make love,
You do business, you pile up the dough,
You take what you can get . . . and then—you're through!

And after that? After that trouble begins.
Comes the other life, another world
That lasts forever—world that *never ends*!

It's a thought, that *never*—a mess that's really infernal!
And yet, good or bad, afloat or below,
That bitch eternity's gotta be eternal!

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MAN'S LIFE

Nine months in the stench: then swaddling clothes
Among kisses, milk of the breast, enormous tears:
Then the leash, the pram, and the child's frock,
Bib and short knickers: the best years.

Then commences all the trouble of school,
ABC's, hard whippings, and frostbite;
Mumps and measles, mess of potty and stool,
A little scarlet fever, worms, the night.

Then comes art, hunger, daily toil,
Comes rent, the government, and iron bars,
Debts and hospitals, the piece of tail.

In summer the sun, in winter snow and hail. . . .
Then for the wind-up, with the blessing of God,
Comes death, and it all finishes with hell.

THE COFFEE-HOUSE PHILOSOPHER[1]

Human beings in this world are the same
As coffee-beans in the *espresso* machine:
First one, and then another, a steady stream,
All of 'em going alike to one sure fate.

Often they change places, and often the big bean
Presses against and crushes the little bean,
And they all crowd each other at the entrance-gate
Of iron that grinds them down into a powder.

And so in this way men live, soft or hard,
Mixed together by the hand of God
That stirs them round and round and round in circles;

And, gently or roughly, everyone moves, draws breath
Without ever understanding why and falls
Down to the bottom through the throat of death.

[1] The original title, literally translated, is: "The Coffee-House-Proprietor Philosopher," which is cumbersome in English. Coffee-drinking is still an institution in Italy, where the "bars" are frequented more for coffee than alcoholic beverages.

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HELL

Belovedest Christians, I want ya to know that hell
Is an old flophouse without bed or board
Made to last forever by the good Lord
Because it gets filled up little by little.

As many Saints as, in a dream, have seen it
Say that though eternally full of fire
There's not a shade of light in it anywhere,
And you tremble worse than if it was winter there.

On the front door of this house of horror
There's a big notice stuck up in tall headlines
That outside says *always,* and inside *never.*

Sweet Jesus, baptized and circumcized,
Lodges here the Turks and Israelites
And us he gives lodging in Paradise.

SOULS

Souls, what are they? they're a kind of air.
Therefore, like to mountains, hills and prairies
Are given heavy airs or delicate airs,
There are delicate souls and ordinaries.

The first are for the Kings and for the Queens,
Popes and persons who are necessary:
Then for the people counted off in reams
Those others, of a quality to the contrary.

For this world the thing is regulated;
But in the one beyond, the fear is great
That it will be turned round like a fried steak.

Because Christ, and St. Peter his guardian
Have to remember as long as God lasts
That he who crucified them was a sovereign.

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THE MASON OF THE WORLD

"To see just what there is above the stars
What can we do?" everybody was sayin.
One said: "So whaddaya need? Ya don't need nothin:
Let's just go an' build the tower of Babel.

C'mon, cement, bricks, slaked lime, a trowel. . . .
I'm manager: you're foreman: all right, guys,
Let's buckle down an' get to work with a will. . . ."
An' God meanwhile was laughin to split his sides.

Already it was high as the cross on St. Peter's,
When—wot's this?! their tongues got all balled up,
An' instead of goin ahead they went backwards.

Nobody understood Italian anymore;
An' while one was sayin, "Pass the hammer,"
The other handed him a pail of water.

THE UNIVERSAL FLOOD

God said to Noah: "Lissen, Patriarch,
You and your sons go and take a hatchet
And from my designs you must build an ark
So high, so long, so narrow, and so thick.

Then make a roof, and cover the whole boat
Exactly like the one at the Port of Ripetta,[2]
And when you've smeared the little craft with tar,
Sail thru the world, collecting beasts, and embark.

You will then see a universal flood,
Compared with which the Tivoli waterfalls
Will look just like piss in a urinal.

Then when you see the rainbow, that's the time,
Noah, to slip out fast, clean up the mud,
And plant seed everywhere within the slime."

[2] A lesser port of Rome on the Tiber.

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MARTHA AND MAGDALEN

"But my dear Jesus Christ," Martha was sayin,
"Who can put up with Magdalen any longer?
Her with her rosary, her mass, her novena,
Her *viacruchi*. . . .[3] An' then she says *I'm* complainin!

I night an' day am tied up here
Bein the servant an' goin all to pieces,
An' this little painted paper saint
Can never be found but at lunchtime or at dinner!"

"Lissen, Martha," replied the Saviour,
"You aren't worthy of understandin this,
That Mary's takin a path that's much more better."

An' Martha: "I don't remain at all convinced;
An' if I also did the way she does,
I'd like to see how the housework would get done."

THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH

The sun extinguished and the world shattered,
Everyone who has been upon the earth
Will go to the Valley of Jehoshaphat
Where as many as wish to are allowed new birth.

Among father, son, grandfather, and great-grandfather,
Doddering drivelers and babes at the breast,
Men of wisdom and men cracked in the head,
There won't be any worst or any best.

There each and everyone, nude and free,
Will be born again like Adam and Eve
And will have to be just thirty-three.

Whoever died older has to drop those years:
The little kids are made older at once:
Then everyone will be as the Saviour is.

[3] Via Crucis: an anachronism, for all events in world history, as far as the fictional narrators are concerned in Belli sonnets, took place in Catholic Rome of the 19th Century.

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THE SOVRANS OF THE OLD WORLD

Once there was a king who from his palace
Sent out among the people this edict:
"*I* am I, and you're nothing but shit,
A crowd of stinking rats, so shut up.

I make straight crooked and crooked straight:
I can sell you all at so much a bunch:
I, if I have you hanged, don't put you out,
Cause your life and all your stuff *I* rent to you.

Whoever lives in this world without a title
Either of Pope, or Emperor, or King,
Can never have a say in anything."

With this edict the executioner was sent
As messenger, probing the people on this view;
And they all replied: *It's true, it's true.*

TWO KINDS OF HUMANITY

We, you know, have come into the world
Put together from all kinds of crap and garbage.
Rewards, position, manners and grand airs
Are all the trade-mark of the privileged.

His Excellency, His Honor, and His Highness
Get phoney medals, titles, luxuries;
For us others, craftsmen and lowdown servants,
The stick, the whip, the big load, the deep-freeze.

Christ created homes and palaces
For prince and marquis, count and cavalier
—The muddy earth he made for us prickfaces.

And when he died on the cross, he had the idea
To spill, out of his goodness, among his tortures,
For them his blood, and for us the People—the whey.

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POPESS JOAN[4]

She was a real woman. She chucked the apron
Before anything else and signed up with the army;
Then she was made a priest, became a prelate,
Then bishop, and a Cardinal finally.

And when the male Pope was taken sick
And died, as people say, by poisoning,
She was made Pope, transported like a king
To Saint John Lateran in the papal chair.

But here we solve the plot of the whole affair;
All of a sudden she got terrific pains
And dropped a kid right there on the chair!

From then on this other chair was arranged
In such a way that it was easy to grope
And tell if the Pontifex was Popess or Pope.

POPE LEO

Before Pope Leo Eleven had gone under
To become a skull and four hambones
You heard repeated everywhere at once
That for us it was a windfall, or still better.

What he did, nothing was really foul,
What he said, everything was wise;
Each enemy of his was a damned fool,
A jacobin, a crook, a louse of lice.

But all of a sudden, as soon as he had croaked,
That blessed Pope became an adder's sting,
An ass, a raging wolf, a crazy-cock.

And so it happened to that poor little thing,
That like the dirty rats when the cat is dead,
They danced upon his paunch a minuet.

[4] Based on a popular medieval legend that a woman once became Pope.

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POPE GREGORY AT THE EXCAVATIONS

"Good!" said the Pope in that unholy mess
Of two excavations at the Roman Forum:
"Beautiful hole! beautiful ditch! beautiful fosse!
Beautiful these paving-stones! swell, by gum!

And just have a little look at that capital,
If a stone-cutter can beat that, I wanna know 'im.
And just have a little look at this speckled marble,
If it don't seem just like an oven stone!"[5]

And meanwhile, as the Pope in the midst of his court
Architects and antiquarians
Was thus expressing his profoundest thought,

The crowd, half-aloud and half-hushed,
Was saying: "Ah, this saint of a man's a genius!
Ah, a Pope of this cut is a great sort!"

WHAT DOES THE POPE DO?

What does he do, the Pope? Oh, he guzzles, snoozes,
Stuffs himself, has a spot of coffee, stares
Out of the window, fusses about, doodles,
Debauches, and takes Rome for a hotel.

Him, he don't have no children, he don't pant
To conduct and harmonize that band;
Because, at the worst, the last plate of soup
Will always be the one he can command.

For him the air, water, sun, bread, and wine
He thinks is his own stuff: *It's all mine;*
As if in this world there didn't exist a fly.

And almost, almost this shrewdie would enjoy
Remaining alone,—just as God was when
He lived before creating angels and man.

[5] Gregory's thoughts run immediately to the kitchen, to a good meal. (Belli)

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THE POPE

God don't want the Pope to take a wife
So as not to bring into this world other popelets:
Otherwise the Cardinals, who lead a hard life,
Would be up shit creek with their little hopelets.

But the Pope at his pleasure can tie and untie
All the knots, the loose ones and the tight,
He can excommunicate, make saints,
And give us all to know where he will strike.

And besides all this that he unties and ties,
He carries two keys so that he notifies
Us: here he opens and here he closes shop.

The triple crown that looks like a roll of rice[6]
Means that he commands, and don't give a crap,
In the world, in purgatory and paradise.

BAPTISM OF A MALE CHILD

What are all these re-polished buckles,
This nice new hat and this Sunday suit?
This carriage, what is it? and this invitation
To candy, ice-cream, wine and fresh fruit?

And your whole savings that you've massacred
Foolishly, crazy jackass that you are,
Because yesterday your wife has given birth
To a servant of the Pope and all his friars?!

You make all this fuss, and all this feast
To baptise someone who's perhaps condemned,
Before being born, to live like a beast.

Poor blind fools! Get it into your head
That the book of baptism in this State
Could easily be called *The Book of the Dead.*

[6] An oval ball of fried rice called suppli, a common dish in Italy.

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THE CONFESSOR

Father . . .—Say the *confiteor*.—I said it.—
The act of contrition?—I already done it.—
Continue, then.—I said *crazy prick*
To my husband, and I lifted four bits.—

Then?—For a pot my cat broke on me
I said before I knew it: "Goddam you!"
I know, it's a critter of God!—What else?—Well,
I went to bed with a young man that I know.—

And what happened there?—A bit of everything.—
That is? The usual way, I should imagine.—
And from the rear. . .—Oh, what a ghastly sin!

Therefore, because of this young man, return,
My daughter, with a heart fully contrite,
Tomorrow, at my own house, around midnight.

THE WHOREHOUSE RAID[7]

The police sergeant having entered the whorehouse,
A priest grimly placed himself in front of him.
He sez: "*Who* are *you*? whaddaya want?"
He sez: "The force, an' I'm gonna run ya in."

He sez: "Doncha know, sonny boy, with who
Ya have to deal with? doncha know? Now you
Just wait a moment and you'll see,—and in
The meantime, jus' remove that cap of yours.

As soon as you have seen *who* I am,
Tell that peanut high priest of the Vice Squad
That I don't know *anybody*, outside of the Pope

And Christ." So having spoke like this, he searched
Himself, raised his right hand to his skullcap,
Took off the black one and put on the red.

[7] Episode from the life of Cardinal Domenico De Simone, born 1768, died 1837.

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WHO GOES BY NIGHT, DIES BY NIGHT

How misfortunes are! Here's the story:
With that open inferno of a night
I was returning from the Broken Head[8]
At three in the morning, not a soul in sight.

Just right there in front of the Doria Palace
I'm about to climb the steps toward St. Mary's,
I slip, and I take myself one Christ of a fall,
And bang, but hard, the back part of my skull.

I was on the ground crying as my life leaked out
When a carriage of a gentleman about
Two feet away passed at a snail's pace.

"Stop!" a servant to the coachman cries;
But from inside the carriage a thin high voice
Ordered: "Go on, *allons!* who dies, dies."

BEAUTY

Come and have a look at my grandmother's beauty:
She has two feet of flesh under her throat;
It's dry and flaky like a Danish pastry;
It shakes and shivers more than a rowboat.

She has enough teeth left to munch soft crumbs;
Her eyes have got lost somewhere in a husk of skin;
And her nose, O the poor lady! ignoring her gums,
Holds deep converse with her bearded chin.

Arms and legs are delicate fan-sticks;
Her voice the broken croak of frog and fife:
Her breasts, flat water-bags where liquid drips.

Well, my grandmother was beautiful when young.
And you, in due time, if I am not wrong,
Will look much worse than even that, good wife!

[8] The name of a street no longer in existence.

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RASIPLAS[9]

"Hello!" "Who's there?" "It's me!" "Who's me?" "Lucy."
"Which Lucy?" "Lucy! Pasquale's stepmother!"
"Oh. *Lu*-cy! C'min! Wot, have ya been sick?"
"Sick—! I almos' died, my dear missus!"

"Poor thing! How long wuz it?" "Since from this Chris'mas
Right up ter the day of Piphany."
"Whaddaya know! An' just wot didja have?"
"A nice filthy disease, that's all! Real deadly—"

"Filthy disease? Wot wuz it? . . . C'mon, dearie, quick!"
"Oh . . . it'd be that . . . well, y'know . . . that swellin
. . . That gets ya in the face an' in the head—"

"Then why doncha say so? Rasiplas." "Ooh, missus!
Fer God's sake, shhh! or else it'll be startin
All over again, an' this time might strike me dead!"

TROUBLES OF THE FIRST FLOOR

She sez, "Nina, someone's knockin. Open the door!"
I'm just finishin lacin up my corset,
I run to the door an' ask: "Who's there?"
"Friends," he sez. "Who d'ya want?" "Bali," he sez.

"Hmm. . . ." I sez, "no one by that name on this floor."
"Wot!" he sez. "But they tole me *here*." "Mac,"
I sez, "whaddaya want me to do? If they
Don't know in the diner downstairs. . . ." " 'Scuse me," he sez.

An' down he goes. "Yore welcome," I sez. "But—hey!
Willya lissen to that—" I sez, "psst! that man—he's *back*!"
I sez, "Is it a Frenchman yer looking for?"

"No," he sez, "an Eye-talian." "Oh, I thought
It was a *mon-soor*," I sez, "but one way or
Another, I jus' *wouldn't* know," I sez.

[9] Erysipelas.

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THE TWENTY-FIFTH OF NOVEMBER

Eight days from now will be St. Catherine's day;
You hunt the roller-mat for the stairway;
Upon the bed you lay the best bedspread,
And light the fire large in the homestead.

The weather on that morning of her name
Will have to be for Christmas just the same.
What does the almanac decide? dew?
You will see dew, then, on Christmas, too.

And already the pipers have begun
To come down to the marshes from the mountain
With those sweet bagpipes! Oh, have you heard?

What graceful little tunes! Every shepherd
Sang them that very way at Bethlehem
On the day Our Lord was born for them.

FINE WEATHER

A day like this morning—listen, it's been long
Since we have seen anything like this weather.
Ah, my dear! you feel you can fill your lung,
It opens your heart to be out of the cellar.

All the vault of the sky blue, blue;
The air, as if perfumed, so sweet-smelling;
What a delight! what a magnificent morning!
It really tells you: get on your feet and go!

We've had plenty of gloomy days—but a day
Like this one you can really call a springtime.
Look what sunshine, look: it's swelling the stones!

As soon as I stuck my face out of the window
This morning, and peered around, I smiled and cried:
Hah! what weather! it's a crystal; it's a paradise!

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FRANK BUTLER

To the Wilderness I Wander

—To Clare

Let me say this story began one warm May morning in the smart, stale, and ordinarily preoccupied mind of a sullenly attractive young woman named Marianne Smith while she was riding uptown on the Seventh Avenue subway. Let me say it began there only because we do not know nearly enough to tell where it actually did or could begin, or even whether the word could apply to what I know happened to her that day.

Something had been disturbing Marianne for several stops, robbing her of the vaguely pleasurable resentment she occasionally felt toward her husband Phillip. Today it was for calling her up to Times Square abruptly and without explanation on the day before the last important review lecture she would give before finals. But something was usually disturbing Marianne, so she did not give it the immediate attention that this time was due. Later she was sorry when she learned that it had been in her power at the beginning to prevent all the subsequent events.

But by the time the doors hissed shut at 14th Street and the train roared away again, down into its tunnelling dark, the intuition that had sought to warn Marianne had also tunnelled a way down into her own trackless consciousness and signalled to her there a distinct worry, and then a growing fear.

She coughed and scratched her right palm where it always itched when she was nervous. It was the one gesture she had not controlled into her system of attractiveness because by now it was her only unconscious one.

Perhaps it was the hiss of the brakes and doors. They seemed slower and more ominous than usual, and to Marianne they had always been ominous. Perhaps the train gathered its speed a bit too quickly, or the slope down seemed too steep for subway tracks, or the tunnel too dark in some odd intangible way. Perhaps she even knew, or almost knew, there was something more. The threads of ordered circumstance are what form our fabric of sanity and the real stuff of madness is when one, then several to-

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gether begin suddenly and inexplicably to unravel, and the familiar pattern becomes confused and unrecognizable, and finally falls away in a tangle of lunacy. But it was not lunacy, but her old instant fear and fascination of it that breathed on Marianne's skin the chill, sudden breath of the impossible that came then. For decay is a delicate process, as slow in the mind as elsewhere in nature. What happened to Marianne may have seemed insane to her, but it happened far too quickly to be anything but a perverse new reality that jerked across those other subtler ravellings of the world she knew with the speed that only a tangible fact can have, pulling tight and taut in her the whole recent tangle of contradictions into a Gordian Knot of indisputable, paradoxical truth: the subway was cold, cold as winter, and this was, as I said, an exceptionally warm morning in May.

All this is what beginning there is, though not the story itself. Yet these first reactions of an intelligent, unhappy and typically befuddled mind under the impact of an unknown and usually terrifying *difference* is possibly a greater part of what ultimately became of Marianne (who was not at all terrified) than we may like to suppose. An instant before the cold had come a warning bell had rung somewhere in her, but too softly and too late for her to escape the living fantasy into which she instinctively felt and even hoped she was travelling. Now with the cold she was sure.

She had begun to grow afraid, but whether from madness or fantasy the larger part of her all the while fully enjoyed the sensation. Since she was responsible and, in a way, even the cause of all that happened to her, I think these details have more than casual importance. But the subway is an incidental instrument. Marianne was not carried down into an infernal region and she would not have accepted it if she had been. I believe she would have indignantly demanded something more original. As usual, she was prepared for the worst, but only the most exciting and diverting worst would do. Marianne did have unique desires for fantasy, but she had more imagination than invention, more brains than real intelligence, and these desires had never been very clear. The truth was that she was too lazy to put them to work for her, even destructively, in any way that could satisfy her dark and usually revengeful yearnings. Marianne would very much have liked to destroy something if she knew how, preferably

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something plodding and everyday, and she would have loved to destroy it with some unknown, satanic weapon torn from the scarlet supernatural she hoped was always slyly lurking about, waiting to be evoked, waiting to pounce. But as yet the subway had done no more than chill her with an uncomfortable draft, and now she felt the first of many subsequent fears slipping regretfully away.

There were few others in the car and Marianne glanced at them very briefly. With her practiced eye she saw only slightly varying versions of the New York subway riders' mask, ugly, complacent, Daily News faces. The pinkish bald man with the sunset tie and two-toned shoes absorbed in the red headlines of his newspaper would doubtlessly consider any question from her a flattery to his pudgy virility. A brown old lady nearer her was bent in sleep over an immense shopping bag and Marianne was sure the two Puerto Rican boys laughing near the door would pretend they did not speak English. Her attention drifted aimlessly and for a while she forgot the cold as she looked them over, one by one.

There was a young girl sitting across at an angle from her with a slim leg crossed bobbing over her knee, very aware of the occasional rodent glance of a studious boy with glasses and books a few seats down. She was chewing gum and humming a juke box tune; pretty in the vulgar and transitory way of the metropolitan peasant. They were like the students her Ph.D. fellowship forced her to teach at Municipal University, and she had never had one she liked. Marianne quickly despised the two and with a cynical sniff convinced herself that she would die before questioning either of them.

That was when a sudden realization snapped her back into her fear: *they* were not cold, nor was anyone else on the car, nor did any of them seem aware of the other less obvious sources of fear she felt all around them. Whatever was happening had chosen her alone.

The train came into a station and suddenly dim light was outside the windows and the fury under the vibrating floor was stilled. For a moment her panic again receded, but soon she clutched it back to her like a defending shield from the newer and nameless terrors outside the car.

Twenty-sixth Street was painted on the pillars. They were squat and arched and of an evil rotting brick that sucked the shadows

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from the catacomb light. Marianne knew with a memory as exact as it was chill that there was no 26th Street station, not anywhere in New York, but she tried in the one poised second before the doors opened to doubt it, to rise and leave quickly, knowing her sense of direction and knowledge of subway routes to be abominable and her imagination dangerously vivid. But her pride was stubborner than her fear and she would not look out again to see if it could be a 23rd or 28th Street station. It was not cowardice. She knew very well what she had seen and that even if she had read it wrong no subway station had ever looked like the one beyond her window. She had failed to convince herself of any doubt that she was brave enough to test, and she accepted the fact.

The horn-rimmed boy glanced up with a nervous start, gathered his books, looked furtively once more at the girl, and left; an old man stacked with dirty packages came in, seated himself with a weary sigh, and stared his anonymous hopelessness at the floor; and before Marianne could have moved, the doors slid shut, this time, she noticed, with a fast and angry hiss, and the train was on its way.

Marianne knew she should feel trapped now, but she was still more excited and curious than afraid, and she could not project into a complete and genuine fear her knowledge that now there was much of which to be afraid. For Marianne it was an old story; her intellect was only barely acquainted with her emotion and one of them had always been far ahead of the other.

Then down at the far corner of the car a distinguishedly shabby old gentleman she had not noticed before looked up startled, his expression wrinkling with anxious perplexity behind his ribboned glasses and the umbrella between his knees clasped so tightly that it seemed an alert and watching thing, as poised with life as the tail of a pointing dog. For a moment Marianne hoped that he was aware of all that she was, that he alone knew and felt and saw all that she did, but his tenseness loosened and quickly passed and the muscles of his face sagged back into a look of sleepy reflection; the indifferent resignation of the aged.

Marianne debated approaching him. She was sure he had forgot whatever alerted him and she had always very much disliked first approaching people she did not know, even tradesmen. But now, she told herself with appropriate grimness, she was desperate. A

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wish that Phillip were here to do this for her flashed across her mind as she rose with an irritated sigh and started toward his corner, grasping the straps as she went.

The colored map near the center door caught her eye. That would do as well, if she could figure it out. Maps had always confused Marianne, but then I think she would have been much more confused if the old gentleman she had not noticed at first had consented to speak to her.

She stood and stared at it closely, feigning annoyance and pouting with her large sensual lips, one hand on her hip and the other holding to the strap. She was a voluptuous woman, but tall enough and with a narrow enough waist to seem slimmer than she was, and this pose usually got her aid. But there were no likely prospects in the car; even the bald man had become oblivious to her as he pondered the wise prophecies of his sports pages. So she gave up and tried to puzzle it out herself.

She had thought at first she might be in an old tunnel that some emergency had forced into use. But this was a map of an entirely different system. As she studied its strangely webbed criss-crosses, she realized that she was on a train that did not go to Times Square or to 42nd Street at all, but stopped only at 37th Street and then at 54th before curving west under the Hudson River and into New Jersey, off the map.

Marianne smiled with pride at her skill. There it was on the map; everything was all right. Once more she instantly forgot all that had frightened her. This was some subway line she knew nothing about, probably some private suburban company's she had boarded by mistake. She had vaguely heard of one at a party once as the guests were leaving and this must be it. She would get off at 37th Street and walk up. Let Phillip wait for her for a change.

She sat down. She was relieved but a part of her was troubled. A part of her hoped against the rest of her that no station would appear and that when it did not appear the terrible and beautiful and impossible reality that had been promised would burst suddenly over her and transport her into another sphere, into another world and land. Till now Marianne's fears had been charged with thrills of violent anticipation, so that when the train pulled into another station as frightening as the first but clearly labeled as

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the 37th Street stop on all the pillars and walls, the sweet deliciousness of her fear passed slowly from her lips as a sour taste. She rose to go, as flat and empty as the animation on a deflated balloon. That same part of her which caused all the trouble was again a disappointment.

It saw her life as a dulled and cheated slave to her rationality and struggled for her against the monotony it hinted too much thought might bring. A perverse imp, she had fed it until it grew fat and sleek, treasuring in the depths of her longing its coiled and winking image of the twisted and macabre. Long after she married Phillip it had crept under her desperate control, beaten but unashamed, waiting. A sly nostalgia would always remind her of how for a few years that image had stirred all the turmoiled waters of her secret self within, never once rippling the slick, silked surface that flowed as smoothly through her neatly channelled marriage and career as that of any other Red Cliff graduate.

It had first grasped her one bored summer in college when she had found herself helplessly plunged into reading all the mystery, fantasy and science fiction stories she could find with the sickly passion of the opium eater. Day after day, for weeks and months, she had lost herself in them until her eyes were red and reality had ceased to exist outside their bright and beckoning covers. The quality of the writing itself gradually meant less and less until the critical judgment of the future English instructor in her had been silenced and ignored by the irrational craving of the fanatic and her laughing dismissal of it to her friends as "my one little morbid fascination, you know," had eventually been given up. She drifted into a study of the Tarot Cards, into Cabalism and astrology and down finally into occult journals and the supernaturalism of the Sunday supplements before the hot hunger was starved out of her. For it was never sated. Marianne just missed being enough of a fool to trap herself in some Brother- or Sisterhood, but she did miss it. When nothing came through with the strange goods her dissatisfied imagination demanded, and though she continued to read the best fantasy and science fiction, the little imp grew increasingly slender on the more refined diet, lately coming out of hiding only long enough to tease, then frustrate her. That was what it had done today.

When she stepped out the door no one followed and no one

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was waiting for another train. Now she really was alone. There were no brassiere ads, no "Times" posters, no candy machines or transit maps on the leprous, scaling walls; and looking further she could see no turnstiles nor change booth and no stairway that might lead up to them. It was tempting, but she knew the subway waiting behind her to be substantial and at least on its way somewhere. She hesitated, shivering in the dank air, then reason reached to get the best of imagination and she turned awkwardly back to the door.

It shut casually in her face. It shut with the same slow and ominous hiss that had first awakened fear in her. The lights merged into a blurring streak, the roar into a straining whine, and the train was gone. A fading memory of the excited, then patient face of the old man trailed after it into the darkness.

This time it took Marianne several moments to match the quick and primal fear that grasped her with the slower exhilaration at her knowledge that the fear actually did exist. But she did. Her hesitation lessened and for a moment she even crossed to the other extreme, looking all about her with the shallow and giddy curiosity of the tourist who stands, guidebook in hand, wondering where to begin her exploration.

The station, if I may still call it that, was mammoth. The low and heavy archways stretched from the tracks as far as she could see, disappearing in the dim haze of the half-lit distance. Except for the gigantic scale it reminded her of an etching of some moldering German (or was it Dutch?) cathedral crypt she once glimpsed in the Fine Arts course she had taken at Red Cliff. But beneath the aging filth of these columns was a strangeness and a sleek sensuality of design and proportion, and even through the thick, twilight haze which seemed a very part of them gleamed a clean directness that had never known the Gothic mind or felt the soaring sturdiness of its spirit.

It awakened the squelched and dreaming imp in her and loosened its craving for the fantastic adventure which the architects of the place seemed to have dreamed into their design. Freed suddenly by it from her first disappointment, Marianne imagined she heard a hint of bigger things to come, and knew that she would follow wherever it led her, wherever it drove its unreined horse of air, into whatever world and through whatever time.

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But nothing happened. The cold settled through her light spring dress and the bleak silence of loneliness began to throb a dull ache deep into her ears. But there were no fireworks; the imp had failed her. Marianne was learning.

She began walking to exercise the damp silence out of her. At first she walked without aim, a sad and pathetic figure, pausing cautiously ever so often to peer this way or that, furiously scratching her palm for a few seconds and then impulsively heading off in a new direction. But gradually a desire for purpose led her where she thought the light might be a very little stronger. She was not sure, and indeed, it was an illusion, but now that the imp was proved and dismissed for good as an impostor it gave her a goal until some more subtle symbol could come to guide her.

Focusing upon it, her thoughts darted back from meandering curiosity to an intense but largely intellectual awareness of her danger. For Marianne accepted her situation as evident truth much more readily than she had many of the phenomena of her everyday experience. She was concerned with her own awareness of the situation now, not with the situation itself. It was there she knew her real danger lay, and with each step ringing its echoes all about her, she stepped a separate way within herself, balancing on a taut line of rationality that divided her buried hysterical fear from her bubbling, passionate recklessness. She knew the former could cripple and the latter instantly destroy her if once she slipped and fell.

Marianne tried to change the subject in her mind. "Poor Phillip, what must he be thinking by now?" she managed to murmur aloud, hoping the volume would strike through the silence and stifle her fear.

She had not really given Phillip much consideration. She wondered whether she ever had. One advantage to marriage was in being able to forget that entire department of life which had to do with the serious importance of men. She did love Phillip, but they did not know each other very well; each had his own work and interests, and they had only been married a little over three years. Phillip was educated, liberal, attractive and successful, and that was what she had wanted. Once he had been more than that but she had soon stamped out of him the fresh and eager directness with which she had originally fallen in love, all the while watching

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herself kill his love for her, indifferent and unable to do a thing about it. He was from Maine and she never let him forget it in her mockery of what she liked to call his naivete. He had hoped that her interests would be her teaching career, her marriage, and the family she refused to have. He had openly come to dislike her facile friends, saying he "damned well wasn't one of *her* liberals," and the many educational and political committees which had filled her life since college that he had once merely called useless, shallow and insincere, he had lately begun quietly to ignore. Still, he was in all other ways as considerate as in their first year of marriage. If anything, under all her impetuous sarcasm and elaborate suspicions, Phillip had grown more patient and understanding, sweeter and kinder to her than he had ever been before. The spark was dead, she knew, but Marianne had no complaints; they got along.

But anyway—poor Phillip; he would be terribly worried by now. Marianne wished *she* could worry about something. She had walked more than half a mile and the chill was seeping back into her again. Perhaps she could become worried about catching a cold. It did seem colder now and she had seen nothing but the archways stretching away in all directions, and no change in the dim light that filtered down from everywhere with maddeningly equal intensity.

Again she wondered whether she were mad. This time it was an idle thought, but still not without appeal. It would explain a good many things about her and about what seemed to be going on, but now she doubted whether she could ever convince herself of it. Besides, she smiled, remembering one of the questions she had prepared the night before for the final, Tom O'Bedlam had described all of it long ago so accurately that she knew she was blocked from that escape, or at least blocked from the kind of madness and escape Tom had known:

> "That of your five sounde senses
> You never be forsaken,
> Nor wander from your selves with Tom
> Abroad to begg your bacon."

"Wander from your selves with Tom" . . . poor Tom, he should know. Poor Marianne, she smiled, but with a little yearning, *she*

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could never know what it was to wander from her five sound senses. She was too sane to do anything more than toy with them, as was the fashion among the elite bohemians she knew, and beneath all her muddled modernity Marianne was just smart enough to know it. Poor Phillip, poor Marianne—she played with the word—never to know the visioned madness that had consumed the mind and soul of poor Elizabethan Tom.

To Marianne, "Tom O'Bedlam's Song" distilled all the terror and fury of lunacy the world had ever known together with a buried but very important something more. That last and finest stanza was to her an embodiment of the whole immense romance of the adventurous spirit, ever seeking to conquer some new and fantastic unknown:

> "With an host of furious fancies,
> Whereof I am commander,
> With a burning speare, and a horse of aire,
> To the wildernesse I wander.
> By a Knight of ghostes and shadowes
> I summon'd am to Tourney
> Ten leagues beyond the wide world's end.
> Me thinke it is noe journey."

And with that song, some anonymous sixteenth century lunatic had struck the chord that lured the first eccentric cave man on a paddled log across an unknown water, and that one day would drive his ultimate grandchildren to their smug seduction of the stars.

Marianne sighed at the thought, knowing it could not apply to her. Something was lacking. Perhaps if she had been a man. . . . She looked about her at the faintly revolting but ominously beautiful architectural desolation, stretching, it seemed, for miles in all directions. Only to stand and look at it was like sipping the delicacy of a fine and evil wine from a cup crusted by alien ages and distant outer worlds. It made her want to feel that emotion of the poem, that clean, wild, intensely burning passion—that burning spear of adventure gone crazy. But for her there was nothing to kindle it, and even a second-hand emotion—an "understanding" of it—would make no real difference to her now, she was beginning to realize, because she was in the very situation the poem described. What difference could it possibly make how she

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reacted? This was no story to her; she was a pulsing, breathing participant of a *fantasy*.

But if she were not beyond the wide world's end, and were mad, what were the furious fancies whereof she was commander? The arches? They were stone. The light? It came from nowhere and everywhere but it cast shadow. The cold on the warm spring day? She was still shivering and her nails where the polish was chipped were grey with the damp chill. Tom, poor Tom; he *knew* they were real, where she had the choice to doubt either nothing, or everything. This was not at all the way it was supposed to be. In fact, under the brilliant glaze of her fear, it was drab and uncomfortable.

By the time Marianne turned a corner and saw a staircase spiralling above her into the roof about ten yards to her right she was not in the mood to be impressed. There was no other in sight and no wall or door near it. It stood alone, unmarked by distinction in any way.

She would climb it, there was no question about that. Even if there had been another choice, this was too neatly convenient for Marianne to resist.

She was winded, and leaned back against the stairway's central pillar. She lit a cigarette. There was no end to the arched colonnades and she hoped that whenever she went back there would be another way out. As she looked around at them for what she hoped was the last time she again felt attraction mixed with repulsion, and both much too strongly for her ordinarily mild and vague tastes toward any form of sculptured mass. They were too coolly slick under their anciently spotted, filthy surfaces; an eloquent architecture sickened and cancered by a clambering organic decay.

Marianne wondered for the hundredth time as she looked at them, groaning under a heavier weight than she knew was anywhere in the world, what the greater structure above her could be or have once been, and how deeply underground she was beneath it. There were only the arches as far as she could see and they gave no clue. Only her one lone staircase could answer her questions and it could well curve spiralling upon itself for thousands of dizzy feet above her before it came to the surface. Or

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back onto itself, she thought, if that was the trick of the plot, for Marianne still thought she knew them all.

Through habit and a not quite subconscious anticipation, Marianne adjusted her hair, smoothed on lipstick and pulled her bodice down more flatteringly over the generous swell of her bosom. Then she mashed out her cigarette against the wall as hard and cruelly as she could, as was also her habit, and began to climb the stairs, wandering, she was thinking, to whatever wilderness there was above.

But the stairway coiled about itself for only a few yards, about as far as the average climb to a subway exit, and opened suddenly into the shadowed back of a long rubbish-filled room. At the front, it looked out through a dirt-smeared window into an empty and silent street.

Marianne shrugged away her mistake indifferently and snapped on a light switch near the stair. There was no evidence here of the building that was implied by the arches below that she had walked through for more than an hour; no evidence that the room was anything but a part of an ordinary building in a very bad state of repair. Then, unexpectedly, its very ordinariness began to excite her. She had scratched at the worming itch in her palm too often and too hard but now under its surface muscular ache an angry nervousness squirmed again for her attention. She went to the door.

It creaked protestingly but opened easily. It was made of raw unplaned wood and had a wooden lever handle. Marianne could not tell how it was fastened together; the joints were very close but neither nailed nor bolted.

The first thing she noticed was the stillness and silence of the street and the city as far as she could see. Next, and in an instant she realized she was not in any New York City she had ever seen, nor very probably even in the twentieth century.

The streets and sidewalks were cobbled with huge, sea-tinted stones, and fine long grass grew high between them. The sky was bright grey, like sooty buttermilk, and the air was moist and thin and chill. Trickles of clear water curled in worn ruts between and across the cobbles to a great rusty grating at the far curbing. The houses were high gabled and tall, and had slim, lead-paned

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and arch-pointed windows and colonnaded verandas that overhung the street. Cool vines hung down from them and coiled about the windows. They were dark and there was no noise of life anywhere behind them, and outside in the streets there was not even the sound of birds.

It was a disappointing landscape for time travel, but Marianne was glad she had not been completely cheated. For a minute she wanted very much to believe she was in seventeenth century New York and that these buildings were Dutch, but they looked just as much Venetian as Dutch and not really very much like either. If it were the past she was in, she wondered what language would be spoken and whether she would be able to teach the twentieth century to somebody. But—and here she had a moment's uneasiness—everything was a little wrong for any historical identification she could ever hope to make.

The streets twisted through a dead city. But a dead city where the ruin had been held in suspension and the rot drawn back from them by a hand that had touched and arranged everything in a pattern that had no reflection in event or time. No huge, unwieldy incredible world had struck at her eyes as she stepped into the street, but one all too much like the one she knew. It was the similarities, not the differences, that chilled her spirit as numb as that dank city below had chilled her bone and muscle. Yet it would have made no difference how much she knew—no difference how many Fine Arts courses she had taken instead of that short easy one her sophomore year—no one could have positioned this city into a time and place that Marianne would know.

This air was comfortable, but as thin as on a mountain top, and it had a faint innocuous odor she knew she would never place. The colors were dull and heavy; colors drawn from earth and sand and ocean, thick, bulging, and a little tired; even the red berries and blossoms on the vines and shrubs were as dark and secret as their leaves. The pitted stone of the buildings had been cut large for homes, if that is what they were, and their joints were fitted in a mortarless hairline only faintly discernible a few feet away. The glass in the lead panes of the windows was tinged with a green that reflected light with the pale sheen of still, tropical seas. They were deeply set in great rows of darkly patterned tile blocks that bordered each window along the street. Small bells hung over

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the street above the doors, a thong dangling down from each of them, beaded handles at their tips. The decay that was eating away at the colonnades below had been here arrested, the force of its hunger imprisoned in a frozen sleep, marred neither by touch nor time.

Marianne was quiet. She no longer heeded the discomforting cold or damp. For Tom, she remembered enviously, it had been much easier. But for her the rules were being broken too frequently, and a dull confusion had replaced the old indifference that had earlier masked her fear. Through that confusion she suspected she could never be excited or thrilled by all that was happening to her, because now her fear had grown far too deep within to permit any shallower level of reaction.

She crossed the street to a diagonally opposite corner. The incongruous sewer grating she had noticed yawned underneath and the bright clean water of the street gurgled softly down into it.

As she stepped to the corner's curbing she saw the street sign for the first time. Marianne started, relieved and yet somehow disappointed at its near familiarity. It was squat, only waist high, and was brick up to metal arms much like those she had always seen in New York. The sign was in English and told her she was at 37th Street and Ninth Avenue. But this 37th Street was not perpendicular to this Ninth Avenue, as she knew all streets in New York above 14th were to all avenues, but ran crookedly back and forth at a sharp northeast angle up across the city. It was one more incongruous detail out of place for either world.

But nothing is incongruous if viewed from the correct vantage point, however difficult it sometimes may be to attain it. A surrealist landscape of objects foreign to each other and arranged upon a plane foreign to them all, appears commonplace enough once one is within it; after a few minutes of looking about, Marianne understood this. She was not so much bothered by an entire world that was incongruous to her own as she was by those details that seemed even incongruous to it. This street sign, the sewer grating, the electric light at the stairhead, and the vague likeness of the entire street to seventeenth century Venice or Holland were bits of the ordinary world she knew which jarred against the total effect of the extraordinary one she was in. They were like the fine, hair-like grass shooting up damp and long between the cobbles

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at her feet, too pale for the seemingly perpetual water trickling among its roots, and yet too thick and lush ever to be so pale. The grass particularly disgusted her, its sharp and alien beauty more revolting than any familiar ugliness.

Marianne stared at the street sign a moment, considering as quickly as possible. She could find some other, some stranger way to follow, or even go back down into the arches to seek the subway again. But for once her decision was rapid. Since it was a choice of following inconsistencies, she compromised, choosing neither to dare too much nor to cringe back just yet. Instead, she chose the way most nearly like New York, heading up the street toward the traditional location of Times Square. Perhaps the same thing had happened to Phillip; perhaps he would even be there waiting for her. A nervous pang slashed through her so quickly she could not recognize it as guilt, and she instinctively glanced back over her shoulder as she entered the gloom of the narrow twisting street: she did not want to think about Phillip now.

The buildings hung far over her, black and formless in the sudden, too-heavy shadow, and Marianne was not surprised when after a hundred yards or so the street turned sharply, became serpentine, and slithered down a long steep hill. She stood still a moment, peering into its narrow spaces. Through the thick gloom cast darkly down upon the cobbles from the hulking structures above her, she could see a gradual widening of the street into a small and desolate square, and in its center could barely discern the dim shape of a dead fountain with a thin tree bending quietly over it.

She smoothed her hand over her hair once, took a deep breath, and headed down the hill, fearing it would fade and vanish as she approached it—that it was all an illusion like the brightening light she had followed through the arches somewhere beneath her. But by now I think that Marianne knew it did not matter, that she realized she had no sure method for distinguishing illusion from reality, and that she must be prepared to accept everything with equal credulity.

The fountain square was dark, but the sky was still a vast bright grey. Its light shone irrelevantly, a huge, remote, and disassociated blank, and cast no shadow on the dark earth spread beneath

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it. The fountain was nondescript, and, Marianne thought, probably vulgar; and the tree (though a common poplar) was unfamiliar to her. She went on.

"If you hurry, you can make it back."

Marianne turned on her heel, her mouth opened and eyes startled. "What—?" she gasped, not thinking, not seeing.

"If you hurry, you can make it back."

He was a tall ugly man, ragged, but proud perhaps, and of no particular age. He was standing on the corner of one of the square's side streets. She realized with an irrelevant shame that he had been there all along, watching her.

"I—I don't understand."

"If you hurry *now*, you can make it back."

"But who are you? Where am I? What—?" She stopped, her lip trembling uncontrollably.

He smiled and bowed his head slightly. "You may call me Benjamin." He stated it directly, a simple and convenient fact for her to know. "Don't worry," he added gently, "You are no place that matters. But hurry."

"Is it—*time*—I'm caught in? Is this the past? Or the future? I'm from nineteen fifty—"

"All right." His voice was tired and patient. "Stay."

"But I *do* want to go back. Please, I do! I just wanted—Oh what's the use? Nothing makes sense."

There was no answer. Benjamin was motionless at his corner on the opposite side of the little square. The fountain and tree were between them. He was half turned back into the street behind him, waiting. One by one the seconds strained away from each other. Marianne's palm was aching and tingling viciously.

"Tell me!" she screamed, the tension shattering off from her like glass upon the cobbles as she ran down their slope toward Benjamin. "Tell me how to get back to New York. You must tell me!"

Benjamin looked down at her, serene and undisturbed. "It was New York?" he said, with faint interest, almost to himself. "You go back any way—the way you came—it does not matter. But it is late."

He gazed upwards, closely reading the flat and featureless sky. "Yes. It is too late," he emphasized slowly. "You come with me."

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There was weary resignation in his voice. He turned and began climbing the street in back of him. "It is not far," he added.

"Come with you? But—" Again she cut herself short as she realized Benjamin was moving away from her up the hill.

"What do you mean, 'too late'?" she called frenziedly after him. He ignored her.

Marianne stood shaking with fury and frustration for a moment of terrible silence. Benjamin would soon be far beyond her. This was the wilderness, Tom's wilderness, and she could not be left alone in it. She could not be left alone to find her own way back out of it, not now.

"Wait," she called, breaking and running suddenly after him, her blouse loose and her thick long hair tumbling wildly about her face. "Please wait for me!"

Benjamin paused and turned and stood at the top of the hill waiting for her, as lifeless-seeming as the inanimate world in which he moved.

"There was no need to run," he said, when she caught up with him and they began to walk together. "Now there is no hurry."

Marianne decided it was her turn not to answer, her not very penetrating or coordinated mind (which worked well and sometimes even excellently on any one level but which had never once managed to broaden or deepen her grasp of a problem by considering questions that were not immediately related to the situation) considering nothing further than the first vague and obvious plan that had occurred to it: to ingratiate herself and pretend acceptance of all the little Benjamin would say until she had somehow won his confidence and found out from him a way to get back.

She said nothing for a moment and they walked in silence to the top of the hill. The houses began to thin apart as they began a descent into a wide valley below.

"Well," Marianne began again, tossing her head with inappropriate cuteness, "My name is Marianne Smith."

"Was it Mary once?"

"Why, how did you know?"

"Mary would be too plain for you when you married a man named Smith."

Marianne was stunned, then angry, but I am afraid all she could manage was: "That's insulting!" and "How dare you?" and a

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spluttering: "And how did you know I was married, anyway?" before she choked angrily silent.

Benjamin's long ugly face turned heavily toward her. His eyes were large, impenetrable, and very mild. "I meant no harm," he said. As he said it Marianne knew it was true, and she was instantly angered because she did know it and because she could say nothing that could either disguise her shame or her resentment for feeling the shame. She scowled, pouting her lips.

"I am sorry," Benjamin went on, answering her real question with a quick glance at the proud expensiveness of her wedding finger's glittering, modern, ostentatious rings, "but numerous women from your New York dislike plainness. I did not know it would offend you."

Marianne could say nothing. What part of the offence had not been false had been slight and both were now destroyed. But it had been another sidetrack. Benjamin was making a fool out of her and though she disliked it, she could find no handy way to defend herself. She *had* changed her name, and being sophisticated (a quality Benjamin obviously neither recognized nor understood) abhorred plainness, abhorred any simplicity of dress or manner that was not calculated to attract covetous men or impress envious women. She fumed because Benjamin had spotted it, mocked it, and, she thought, used it to keep her from asking too many questions.

But it was not so much Benjamin's polite accusation of pride that silenced her (for which he had reasons designed only to lessen her eventual hurt and despair) as it was the sheer number of unrelated questions that bred together like anxious insects in her throat, finding no escape by tongue into words. Now that she was at last confronted by the most startling questions a mind could ask, she was unable to grasp even one of them with her voice and break the irritation she always felt when she had nothing to say.

For Benjamin frightened her. If she could get at him, Marianne was certain he would answer all that confused or disturbed her. It was a simple, neat answer she wanted and she saw no reason why Benjamin should not have it. Marianne distrusted subtleties. Only on a printed page or in the classroom were they real to her. She best liked the thick, liberal, all-inclusive statements about life, and

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since she had never found enough respectably intellectual ones to make much sense out of things, she held hard and tightly to the few she did possess.

Benjamin had said nothing since his apology.

"It seems to me you could be a little more honest with me, Benjamin," Marianne remarked with throaty sincerity.

"Not yet," he answered shortly.

He nodded. "This is our valley. When near, the details have their own beauty, as in the city. But I am the only one who ever bothers to leave it."

The valley was a deep broad field. It stretched rolling and gross, like a fat woman sleeping under a dull green bedspread, and was dotted by tufts of gaunt, occasional houses like the ones in the city, empty and lifeless, but neat, sealed, and like everything else, waiting.

"It's—it's horrible," Marianne whispered over her shudder. "I don't see how you ever live here."

Benjamin ignored the disgust in her voice. "If you are hungry, someone will find food for you." There was no humorous play on her comment in his remark. He was merely changing the subject again.

"Fine!" Her teeth edged the word with sarcasm, but its thrust was wasted.

"Food is not easy here."

"Why?" she asked. It was another word she could always coat with cold contempt.

Benjamin was silent a moment, wondering whether Marianne was ready for his answer. He decided and spoke: "We must forage," he said, and his own despair caved imperceptibly under the words, like a coffin under the smooth green of its grave.

Marianne turned to him, an echo of his desolation ringing in her voice: "I don't understand. There's a whole city there—fields —land everywhere."

"It is not a city; not in any time. You saw that. And little good grows in the ground. To live is to forage."

To live is to forage: the words were bitter and awful. Out of the chill that fell like a shadow upon her from his flat calm voice a visioned face flashed terror across her mind—a lunatic: the

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leather cap and straw hair, pale laughing eyes, the nonsense dance of the sing-song tenor:

> ". . . Nor wander from your selves with Tom
> Abroad to begg your bacon."

She clutched at his arm impulsively, violent dizziness flooding through and out of her. "Oh, Phillip—" she cried weakly.

"Your husband?"

"He called me—"

"Yes. I know how it usually happens."

Marianne began to cry as she had never cried before, softly, deeply, quietly. "Oh, Phillip, Phillip," she repeated over and over again between her sobs, guilt and regret crowding into her small memory.

Benjamin held her gently and firmly until she ceased. He smelled of damp leaves.

"Marianne," he said softly, "Marianne, there is no way back. There is no way back because there is no way here. It happens."

It was impossible for Marianne to accept his words as truth quite yet. The trouble lay in that sharp division in her of emotion and intellect, the weak double core that simplified onto a single uncoordinated level all that came her way. The jealous two had never worked together and either could allow her moods and ideas to be quickly changed at will, and without the other, either could also let her believe anything she wished. She was instantly afraid and actually incapable of doing anything but ignoring the complex reactions that were demanded by those certain realizations now forced upon her. For the last desperate time she could only try to change the face of her mood—a final coin flipped impulsively into the air to be caught and held for the gamble of a future idle guess.

She flung her head back proudly and the old stimulus was immediate. Against this strange earth she felt the countless human centuries, her brilliant parents, her four years at Red Cliff and three as the youngest member in the English department of Municipal University, swell and surge through her. "I'll find a way," she said. It was a simple and satisfying answer and she delivered her favorite smile with bright confidence.

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Benjamin's face was expressionless. "No. All would have vanished if you had ever denied it. Others have succeeded. But now—it is too late."

His words knifed through her thin, synthetic courage; she instantly and vividly remembered the old man with the umbrella, and those other crucial seconds after she had met Benjamin. But she soothed the wound of the offending memory. "Don't worry, I'll get back. I have to give a test on Elizabethan lyric poetry to a class of grocers' children." Her voice was gay, a cousin to her cocktail voice.

Benjamin gazed slowly over her face and looked down into her eyes as he patted her gently on the arm. "Please don't try," he said.

She bit her lip as she turned away, but tasted a bitter pleasure in the tension of frustrated suspense she sensed in Benjamin's remarks and answers. She would not pump him for information yet. She would enjoy the huge little mystery, show indifference to him, and pretend to have her own secrets and plans.

Benjamin waited a moment for her to speak and when she did not, turned away from her purposefully and pointed down the hill to a cluster of huts ringed around a flat and shallow hollow in which chairs and tables were scattered haphazardly. No life was visible.

"I will take you there. We are few and it is peaceful. You will find no trouble."

This was the knight of ghosts and shadows who was summoning her to Tourney. It looked a very dull one. She shrugged and fluffed her hair behind her ear. Her anger now was that she could not get ahead of him, that he alone of all men ignored her best tricks, one after the other. Marianne found it attractive and wondered what the secret was; it never occurred to her that Benjamin did not even notice them.

She grasped the advantage of his introspection with a superior tone: "I should think you would live in the houses or in the city. Why don't you want to rebuild things and start over?"

He smiled a quick but patient smile back over his shoulder at her question and began walking down the hill. "Come," he called back.

Marianne knew better than not to follow him this time, but a renewed rage burst hotly over her as she caught up with him.

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"Why don't you answer me, you—" She grabbed at his arm as she had before.

He flung it easily from him. "Nothing was built for us and nothing can be used, nothing is over and nothing, nothing at all, can ever be begun. Things here are the way they are and are the same everywhere." He turned to her, small new fires at the centers of his eyes. "Don't you see that?"

Marianne flushed. "Well," she said determinedly, "You said the ground's no good either. Why don't you go somewhere else? You know you could do *something*, Benjamin," she added, a trifle condescendingly.

"We can do nothing. Nor can you."

"But why?" In her earnestness, Marianne had forgot her anger; now she wanted only to get to the point. "If you didn't build everything here, what happened to the others, the ones who did? And where are *you* from then?"

"Questions and answers have no point. We are from our various places, like you. No 'others' were ever here, Marianne. Please understand that!" He looked at her for a moment and a deep, perhaps a personal pain dimmed his eyes. "Pieces of time, pieces of places, slipped here and almost made another place and time, one as real as the one you knew."

"That's why everything looks so—so *almost* familiar?" Benjamin's tone had quieted her again. "Those streets back there—something like places and times I know about. . . ." Her voice trailed off.

"This is a place of the things that did not quite happen, Marianne," Benjamin interrupted her groping thoughts, "a place of man's unchosen alternates. Perhaps there are others; I do not know. But in one way this is failure itself. If it had succeeded, this would have been a world of slightly different wars and histories and slightly different tastes, a world, it seems, whose empire would never have gone far from the sea, a world of people a little different in every way. But, their world and their time were stillborn with them. So you see, they never really existed at all."

A shallow and defensive suspicion flared one last time in Marianne's voice. "How do you know so much about it?" she asked. "I'm not so sure you—"

"I know little; I said that once. It was long before memory

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here, not long ago, remember, but before memory. So no one can tell what happened, and be certain." Scorn lapped a quick thin wave over his words. "Go, do, and think what you will, Marianne!"

"Benjamin, please—" Marianne stammered. She turned away and looked around her. "It's so confusing—even the air and sky are different here and nothing moves. Everything is—everything—"

"Everything is *stuck*," he finished for her. "It failed, grew tired and stopped, but 'stuck' is the better word. Now it is outside time, Marianne, outside all space that can be named." His voice fell. "I wish I did know all. But no man knows time, and we can see no more of its relativity here, outside, than say, your Phillip, back within it, even though we are victims of that relativity itself. This world is time's refuse heap, or one of them, stuck where it could be conveniently found by those odd few who always wanted it from their own beginnings."

Marianne thought hard a moment. "Oh, Benjamin," she cried then, desperation and humility, despair and sincerity welling up together in her voice. "But this 'time' that is wrong: why—what did it do to me? *When* are we?"

"It did nothing to you, Marianne. Time is not wrong. It is you. You must understand one thing: this is not past or future, not behind or ahead of the world you knew, or slightly knew. It is—*elsewhere*."

"But it *is* the earth. I mean, in a way. . . ." She tried to begin again. "You said—"

"It is a cousin earth. Look," he nodded down to the ominous valley that stretched westward to a flat and greasy Hudson and eastward to jungled swamps that would be the East River, "only the form, not the features, are here. It is an elsewhere earth, similar, but nothing that ours could have ever been or become within its own directions of time."

Marianne's face was empty, blank from the comfortable mask that had been ripped away from its original, long-forgot foundation. Under it her elaborate inner systems were crumbling fast away, and she was losing the smoothness which had at first allowed her to ignore many things that had displeased her. Her

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confusion was more and more honest and direct: "But, Benjamin, that's what I was trying to say! Isn't it time that went wrong with me, however it happened? How could I have done—"

"Time does not go wrong. Time," he paused, searching until the possibly telepathic image sprang to him,—"time is a wilderness we wander in."

The old, newly-deepened image startled Marianne, but she did not show it. She was excited and came back quickly, "Then this is like—something like another trail through it?"

"No. There can be only one. That is why everything here is stopped. That is why everything is stuck, leading to no past or future. The random route through time is beaten by any humanity into the only trail it can know. There can be only one. This world is of the unchosen choices that slipped off. But you did not slip, nor did I, Marianne. We sought."

"It's no use. I don't understand." Her voice flattened. "I thought I did but I don't. Can't you—where are we, then?"

"Nowhere—I don't know. I understand little more than you." He sighed. "If I did I could talk and explain and demonstrate and it would be only an adventure story for both of us. But this is not Africa, Marianne, and I have found no romance to tell you and no weapons for us to use."

He looked into her puzzled, frightened face. "Think this way," he went on sympathetically, and yet with a certain sense of climax. "If a trail, there are no parallels to it. There are no easy ways, perhaps no ways at all, to the past or future of your own path of time." He paused. "These are the unexplored woods along the wilderness way, Marianne. This is somewhere far beyond the border."

"Wait a moment." Marianne could go no further. She needed time to overtake the racing meanings in Benjamin's deceptively slow speech. She sat down upon a stone, weakly, her arm and hand stretched out stiffly behind her to ease her weight down slowly. The village was very near now and Benjamin stood beside her, facing it. Smoke wisped thinly up from a roof-hole in one far hut.

"Wilderness—trails—it's all so confusing! Phillip called me to come—"

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"But instead, you see, you had to come here."

"—Ten leagues beyond the wide world's end," she added in a leaden monotone.

"Yes." Benjamin's voice was also heavy. "That says it."

They were silent.

"Oh, Benjamin, how was I trapped?" Marianne said wearily, not looking up.

He looked at her with a calm and direct dare: "By yourself."

She thought. She was trying, but it seemed very difficult to understand him. "But perhaps—even now, if I went back the way I—" She turned an earnest face up to him. "You see, I only got on the subway—"

"I know; I know how it happens. The subway is an incidental instrument. But it is no matter. There is no more a way to talk about it now than there is a way to escape it."

"But I must, I simply must escape it. Surely you understand that? What have I done to—"

Benjamin sharpened his voice. "It is your own fault you are here."

Hers was still calm, because the truth had not even yet effectively struck her. "My fault?" she repeated wearily, "But all I—"

"I know." He was gentle again; Benjamin played his difficult and unhappy part with a perfection of patience. "You are here because you are a fool. You are here because you always wanted to come here. You are—"

The sting was finally sharp and deep. She jumped to her feet. "Me? A fool?" The blood was in her face. She had forgot herself and was unusually pretty. "You don't know much about me, I see."

He laid his hand on her arm. "I know you, Marianne. You are not difficult."

She jerked it away and laughed with an assurance revived by her momentary scorn. "Well, anyway, Mr. Benjamin, you're here too, aren't you?"

"When you hear truth, do not act a play against it. Not any more. You are here for good, and there is no one to impress." His voice under the harsh words seemed absurdly compassionate. Marianne knew it would be impossible to be angry or even to

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contradict it, and that drove her hurt and anger into another bitter and cheated silence.

Benjamin looked over her head, away into the distance. "I am from a time when it was not the fools who slipped and fell into this stagnancy. You are. If you were not a fool you would not be here. If you had ever found anything to do you would never have wandered your life away to search out this wilderness. If you were not a fool you would never have believed in it when you sensed it rising up before you." He looked down into her eyes, piercing, holding them to his. "From your world only the fools get as far as meeting me and many of them manage to get back in time."

Marianne sat dumbly, staring at the unsympathetic ground.

"Let us go, Marianne. You will see we have much to share. Once I thought I desired this, too. Like you I went too far," his voice fell, "though for other reasons. But come."

The truth was staring at her, there in the reiterated word "fool," and she knew it. But Marianne better knew that she could not allow herself to be convinced of it quite yet. She had still to get that other truth settled, the truth that said she could never get back to New York and to Phillip. She had first recognized it when Benjamin had said, "All right. Stay," but she had hurled it from her mind, then and again and again, only to have to seek and gradually reapproach it later. There had to be a final statement before she could contain it as fact.

"No. I do appreciate your analysis of me and your eagerness to guide me further," she said firmly and coolly and with false irony. "But I'm going back. I'm going back to those arches and somehow find that train."

She rose and adjusted her clothing to approximate neatness, smiled and extended her hand. The act, even if Benjamin knew it was one, was as good as she could make it.

"I have known no eagerness, not for a long time," Benjamin said, rejecting the offered hand. "Please do not try to find the train, Marianne. No one ever has. But if you did find the arches, and if you finally found a train, there still is no return track. You would only be carried further out into the wilderness—" his hand waved over the landscape—"somewhere much further than this."

He looked down at her. "And if you did not find a train you

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would never find me again. You would never find our village. You would not only be lost but alone."

Marianne's face contorted in desperation. "But before, you said I could get back—Benjamin, I just can't help it. I must—"

"Be wise, now."

The three words turned the key over the fast click of the lock. She collapsed upon the ground and wept, wrenching terrible sobs like purged devils from out of her breast and grinding her face and fist viciously into the dirt. "Oh, Phillip! I was so unfair, so self—" She bit her lip savagely until she tasted the warm sweet salt of blood. She would at least try to be no more of a fool than she had already been (and instantly she knew that now she had accepted that truth, too). She would keep the bitter grievance that had been her marriage a prisoner of her own self-reproach. She would at last know emotion in enjoying the torture of this one. She gave herself over to her demanding tears, and as she did Benjamin waited beside her, his hand touching her shoulder lightly, until finally they stifled themselves into muffled silence and she looked slowly up to him.

"Benjamin, let me stay with you," she said, still choked with tears, her face glistening wet and anxious. "I want to stay with you. You said we had a lot to share, and I'll change—"

"We change some, here, though nothing else does." He brought her gently to her feet. "And we stay together. But there is no pairing, Marianne. Except for duties."

This was what would have to be changed. Experience had taught her how, and fear was teaching her why. She could not face her own guilt alone, and within she had already heard it insisting to know her intimately for the first time. She had been regretting, but with a thin and indifferent blamelessness, the disease she had injected into her marriage, her slow deceptions of her friends and the betrayals of her own promise and dreams long ago. But Benjamin was summoning an unwelcome pang from somewhere beyond the memory of her earliest years that was transforming that vague regret into a keen remorse. Now before the mirror of a lonely inferno—her Inferno—her true features sharpening in the clearing fog that had steamed the glass, she watched the clear, pale image of her own self-drowned love fade beyond her remembering reach, her Phillip's eyes accusing her of all she had been and

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never been, the patient lines of hurt and disappointment that had deepened their corners instantly recalling that other look she knew so well: the cold, young distrust that had always hardened in mockery upon the faces of her students. She would be dead to him and to them soon, a digit in the Missing Persons statistics and a curious, vanishing mystery in the minds of a few. But Phillip would never consent to die in her mind, unless she could focus her feelings upon someone else. She wanted to earn a partial redemption for herself in making up some of her wasted life here, to Benjamin. But much more, she wanted the safety he offered her from her own memories. Whoever he was and wherever he was from, Marianne had known from the beginning under her fool's automatic defenses that he was a good man, and now that she was learning the nightmare truths about her own life she wanted at least to give that devotion and respect she had never had for anyone to him, in Phillip's name, as not only a sort of penance for a life that had been largely a drab, confused insult to itself and to others, but mainly as certain insurance against the horror of having to live with an increasing realization of her own guilt, alone, here in her own hell.

She began with a mild flirtation. "We *could* pair, as you call it, Benjamin, if you think you could ever like me after the way I've been." She groped, then reached deep for the right argument. "You are right about me, you know, but I've been looking in at myself, and found, to my surprise," she smiled, prettily and naturally, "that it isn't *all* bad in there. I know I could change if you think I'm worth the trouble."

Benjamin could say nothing. Marianne watched his eyes flicker pity, then die to resignation. This was her last chance, or there was nothing. A grenade of anonymous fear burst within her, but she stifled it, and only a slivered fragment quivered in her voice. "Well," she laughed, "do you think I am?"

"You do not understand. Of course you are worth anything that's possible—"

"Well, then?" Her interruption was pitched high in anxiety.

"There is no love and little emotion here. There are no men and no women. There are only lost *people*. I am so very sorry. For I do believe much of what you say, and I think I understand the rest."

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This was the climax of Marianne's life: this one exploding moment of absolute desperation was her summit and summation. In its electric flash over the city of her mind she saw that intricate maze in quick, stark clarity; how happiness had been lost by her almost from the beginning, and how here at this too-early end, a bit of it could be regained and even be created out of old regrets and wrongs. That salvation could not be lost to her in some courtyard of chance, and down the alleyways another desperation streaked to catch control of it, loosing the hound of her fear upon her tiring intellect.

Her smile was tragic, horrible. "I'll bet I could change your mind, Benjamin. Why don't you come over here and give me an opportunity to see what I can do?" The garish words grated in her ear, distant and unreal, like the startled outburst of a deep-dreaming sleeper.

Benjamin did not answer and a soft, agonized shame fell in silence between them. It was very long before he spoke. "You will be indifferent to life soon." His voice was very quiet. "For think, Marianne, there can be no hope or heart here." He paused again. "In an hour or two, you will be one more of us, and that will be all; that will be all. Most go quicker, but you—" Benjamin faltered that one time, "you are a girl—" he turned away—"of great vitality. I wish you had not had to come here."

He turned quickly back to her and placed both hands upon her shoulders. "Do not worry about what you said to me. I know what was in control of you." His fingers clenched her tightly. "Hold to your memories. They are not emotions, they are not feelings, but they are what you have now, Marianne. Hold to them."

Marianne wanted to cry, but her tears were gone. "How can I hold only to guilt?" she cried in despair. "I must do something—oh, you don't know what it is, what it's like to know all that I know about myself!" She moved to scratch her palm, then noticed that it no longer itched, and knew that it never would again. It bled slightly at the center where she had finally dug away the skin and it was very sore.

"Look what happened to me a moment ago!" she shouted suddenly up to his immobile face, and her voice fell. "I am sorry for all that—" she dismissed it, "but I know I'll die if there isn't something left for—for *us*," she blurted down her last barrier, "—be-

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sides memory. I shall die; I know I shall! Please don't tell me it's all—that it's all there is here!"

"Yes, memories are all we have left. But you have time for many of them and I am sure they all will not be so bad as that." He tried to be casual; Benjamin had come to like Marianne. "There will be much time for their mellowing. There is no death, you know, where there are no days and nights."

Her eyes glazed wide in sudden, horrified realization and she turned sharply away out of his hold to stare down the hill at the squalid village. She had heard the words of the great curse, and here even that was not to be enough. Now she finally grasped with her own hands the terrible throat of the world that lay in coma around her; the sick, chill fantasy in which she had plunged herself through a trick—a warp, they called it, she remembered from far, dimming memories—in time. By merely always desiring it, like the swift dark river of a cave under all the passages of her surface life, she had found this cancered appendage of space and time, and had burrowed her way like a worm down into it where she could live forever, three quarters dead and one quarter ill with her guilt of life. This was a patch of perpetual potentiality, incomplete, over-grown, timeless—a wild jumble of improbability, and it was what she had chosen. She was to be torn sexless by it and strung there head downward, in an eternal suspension of life and death.

Marianne remembered as a lifetime ago, the colors that had first met her on the street, the old thin air, the filtered light and unbelievable sky, the dead, faceless intelligence watching dumbly from the arches and buildings, and the sensed difference in the subtle mosaic of detail that is the background of familiar experience and that here had been all wrong, distessellated, broken. She understood now why love, why almost all emotion, had spent itself out and died here: they were *extensions* of experience; there could be no room for them in a world without time, for here experience could only be known as a series of unconnected dots. It was not only decay, but all action and life that had become timeless in this terrible land, restrained and self-contained, as if a falling leaf could spin once in the air and shatter it all back into an ordered world of event and place; but because of that it bore a terrible beauty, for one knew the leaf would never fall or spin

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to break the bubble, and that the long, long moment of its world would always keep an agonized charm as it waited and watched, poised against a space it could never name.

Benjamin was breathing behind her. Like all else here, he was waiting for her to acknowledge the final truth. Now that the time had come, she knew there was no reason to avoid its pain. It was less than she had thought.

She noticed she had been mumbling. "It was an easy trip for me here, Benjamin," she said softly, when she had caught herself.

"Yes, it would seem so." He was quiet a moment. "What was that you were repeating?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter. A part of a poem."

"Perhaps you would say it for me, before we—"

"All right." She looked past the village and into the wide, white, unblinking sky. The words were of this place.

> "With an host of furious fancies,
> Whereof I am commander,
> With a burning speare, and a horse of aire,
> To the wildernesse I wander.
> By a Knight of ghostes and shadowes
> I summon'd am to Tourney
> Ten leagues beyond the wide world's end,
> Me thinke it is noe journey."

"Thank you. I think I understand it, Marianne."

She looked at his face and into his eyes and saw what she had not looked for before. She saw the remains of a dreamer, and of the thinker who had driven the dreamer too far. "You understand it better than I do, Benjamin. For me it was only irony."

"It was only that for all of us." Benjamin smiled at her. "We must go now." He took her by the arm as he had done before. "You are tired. I will help you, if you wish."

"No," Marianne said, gently shaking off his hand and moving ahead of him as they began walking the last long slope down to the village. "If I must start sometime, I believe I can make it alone now, Benjamin."

They went through the gate and into the village, and as they did, Marianne passes totally from my interest as the chronicler of her story, for there and ever afterwards it was all as Benjamin had said.

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WILL C. JUMPER

Whom Seek Ye?

A NOTE ON ROBERT LOWELL'S POETRY

Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, O Christicolae?
—Iesum Nazarenum crucifixum, O Coelicola.
—The English *Quem Quaeritis*

ROBERT LOWELL, who won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1946 with the volume *Lord Weary's Castle*,[1] is viewed by a number of contemporary critics as the present best hope of American poetry; and, since critical interest in his work has been high for more than ten years, he warrants consideration by the serious student. This discussion will be concerned with some aspects of the Pulitzer Prize volume, a fact which obviously limits the range of the poetry examined; but such a procedure is not unfair to the poet, for the collection is a representative sampling of his best work. Except for a greater interest in the narrative built upon the dramatic monologue—an interest already evident in at least two poems in *Lord Weary's Castle*—the work appearing subsequent to the prize volume shows no marked characteristics not found in the 1946 book. Indeed, the later poems demonstrate the weaknesses rather than the strong points of the earlier work.

Critical interest has concerned itself largely with four aspects of Lowell's writing: thematically, his Catholicism and his radicalism; technically, his traditionalism and his violence. But the terms are misleading. The Catholicism—which is at least three-quarters anti-Calvinism—is certainly ubiquitous; the radicalism is a curious mixture of Jeremiah, St. Francis of Assisi, and Karl Marx; the traditionalism resides largely in technical detail—and that with a difference—; and the violence is both thematic and technical to an explosive degree.

For an understanding of the collection we have, aside from the poems themselves, two clues furnished by Lowell. In a note[2] he tells us that the title—which is not the title of any poem in the book—comes from an old ballad:

It's Lambkin was a mason good
As ever built wi' stane:
He built Lord Wearie's castle
But payment gat he nane . . .

In a prescript[3] he prays:

[1] Robert Lowell. *Lord Weary's Castle* (Harcourt, Brace).
[2] *Ibid.*, p. vii.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

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> Suscipe, Domine, munera pro tuorum commemoratione Sanctorum: ut, sicut illos passio gloriosos effecit; ita nos devotio reddat innocuos.

In view of the emphasis of the book and the sentiment of the Latin quotation, it seems possible that Lowell means Lambkin to be Christ, Lord Weary to be mankind smothered in *acedia*, and the castle to be the structure of salvation. But, of course, other logical meanings cannot be overlooked. The exploitation of the poor by the rich is a recurrent theme in the book, and the stanza fits the idea. Also, for Lowell, the inertia of habitual sinful behavior—built by the individual man, as it were, stone by stone—is the donjon-keep of damnation, and one of the major evils against which he inveighs. In a more self-pitying and personal poet, one might suspect the stanza to be the poet's cry against an unappreciative audience; but this construction applies to Lowell only if he is being ironic. Presumably the volume is both commemorative and didactic; but the saints are hard to find—except in intaglio—, and the *passio*—in both senses—is far more prominent than the *devotio*.

One avenue of investigation which may be fruitful for the understanding of a comparatively young poet is the influence exerted upon his work by other writers. In specific poems—titled as "after" various poets—the tribute of imitation is paid to Rimbaud, Valery, Rilke, and Sextus Propertius.[4] In his introductory note he mentions that he has borrowed a line from C. F. MacIntyre (whose name he misspells), an ardent proselyter for T. E. Hulme, Laforgue, Baudelaire, and Rilke. Other poems name or implicate, in an approving sense, Vergil, Dante, Hawthorne, and Melville; in a pejorative sense, Bunyan, the American Puritans, Unitarianism, and transcendentalism. Other influences, less specific but equally definite, can be found. "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket," if it leans heavily on Melville for both matter and manner, also looks to Milton for its rhetorical effects. The trick of deliberate ambiguity, the Janus-word, though deriving originally from Donne, probably arrives at Lowell through Pound, Eliot, and Auden. The interest in Propertius and Dante and the copious use of phrases and full lines in Latin and Italian also point to Pound and Eliot, though the non-English quotations in Lowell are thoroughly integrated into the prose sense. Crashaw almost certainly lurks behind meditations like "As a Plane Tree by the Water," and the couplet that Lowell employs for narrative and for satire seems closer to Crashaw (for example, in "For Hope") than to any other poet, especially in the violent enjambements in mid-phrase and the free use of short lines. The social protest stems from many sources, though Cobbett is the only specific mention that Lowell makes. The Catholicism comes

[4] Strictly speaking, these are not "imitations." They range from fairly close paraphrases, like the Rilke, to loose adaptations like the Rimbaud.

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from Church tradition, the Vulgate Bible (especially the Old Testament), and the huge body of Latin and vernacular writing which the Church has accumulated, but it comes as well from Dante and Crashaw. Its corollary is the anti-Calvinism which motivates, I think, Lowell's interest in Hawthorne and Melville and which certainly defines his attitude toward Bunyan, Mather, Hooker, and Edwards as well as toward Unitarianism and its pantheistic offspring.

Randall Jarrell[5] says of Lowell's poetry:

> The organization of the poems resembles that of a great deal of traditional English poetry . . . , but often this is complicated by stream-of-consciousness, dream, or dramatic-monologue types of structure.

This is true, as we shall see, but the complication is far commoner than the simon-pure form. Elsewhere in his essay, in a passage which is intended to be complimentary and which was approved by Lowell for publication in the Ciardi volume, Jarrell says:

> The things in Mr. Lowell's poems, have, necessarily, been wrenched into formal shape, organized under terrific pressure, but they keep to an extraordinary degree their stubborn, unmoved toughness, their senseless originality and contingency.

This statement is remarkable for more than the punctuation—which has been carefully reproduced. If we remove the first comma, replace the fifth comma by a semicolon, and understand that "formal shape" refers only to structural details, we have in the words of a warm admirer of Mr. Lowell most of what we should want to say in criticism of his techniques. And, obligingly, Mr. Jarrell has also furnished us with the text for the other major objection when he says,

> what is permanently excessive is a sort of obstinate violence or violent obstinacy of temperament and perception. In a day when poets wish to be irresistible forces, he is an immovable object.

This violence is exemplified by the sonnet "The Soldier," in which Lowell lifts the predicament of Buonconte of Dante's *Purgatorio* from its context and, by means of odd juxtaposition, fallacious theology, and building rhetorical tension, creates a diatribe against war that is brutal, poetically shocking, and metaphysically violent to the extent of lacking unity as a poem.

In "The North Sea Undertaker's Complaint" the problem is a different one. The poem suffers partially from the employment of a non-existent plot—or at least a plot not existent in the poem itself.

[5] John Ciardi, ed. *Mid-Century American Poets.* (New York: Twain Publishers, Inc., 1950), p. 164. All the quotations from Jarrell will be found in this volume, pp. 158-67. Rather than writing his own prose introduction, Lowell suggested the reprinting of Jarrell's discussion.

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But the big problem lies in the use of private language at crucial points in the poem:

Now south and south and south the mallard heads,
His green-blue bony hood echoes the green
Flats of the Weser, and the mussel beds
Are sluggish where the webbed feet spanked the lean
Eel grass to tinder in the take-off. South
Is what I think of. It seems yesterday
I slid my hearse across the river mouth
And pitched the first iced mouse into the hay.

Up to this last line, although there is too much repetition, some idiosyncratic enjambement, and occasional overly-conversational diction, the poem has employed excellent detail for recreating the scene. But what does the eighth line mean? It may mean "and buried the first dead priest," but there is no way of proving it; and the line seems unduly slangy if that is the meaning. It continues, clearly in a somewhat Laforguian vein:

Thirty below it is. I hear our dumb
Club-footed orphan ring the Angelus
And clank the bell-chain for St. Gertrude's choir
To wail with the dead bell the martyrdom
Of one more blue-lipped priest; the phosphorus
Melted the hammer of his heart to fire.

Again, what does the last line and a half mean? Up to this point we can assume that the dramatic monologue presents the undertaker's anti-clericalism and his blasé view toward death as opposed to the "normal" and perhaps sentimental view. But why "phosphorus"? Why the strange concluding figure? Is he still equating the priest to a mouse? Is the phosphorus to be taken as the common poison for rodents? If so, how does it fit into the plot of which we have only a fragmentary glimpse? Even if, as has been suggested, the phosphorus is to be identified with the phosphorescence of the *aurora borealis,* and therefore with the killing cold of the North Sea, how does it fit into the poem? The all-important—for a sonnet—final line has shot off in a completely unrelated direction and shattered the unity of the poem. Whether obscurity or obscurantism, it is bad writing.

These two sonnets show some of the ways in which Lowell employs the "psychological organization" of his experimentalist mentors as opposed to the "logical organization" of traditional poetry. However minutely one may wish to break down structural methods of poetry for purposes of clarification and classification, it is obvious that repetition with variation, rational progression of argument, and narrative (or balanced combinations of these) are basically and traditionally "logical" modes of construction. It is equally obvious that what Yvor

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Winters calls pseudo-reference, qualitative progression, and the double mood (when it is truly double rather than consciously employed for controlled contrast) are basically "illogical." Defenders of the latter types of organization have seized upon the valid researches of psychologists into the irrational aspects of human behavior—*for the purpose of more complete rational understanding*—and have made these data the basis of a justification of irrationality on the grounds that, if illogical, such organization is psychological, that is, true to the structure of uncontrolled sensory-emotional experience. If poetry is to be no more than an attempt at reproducing sensory-emotional experience, then the method is perfectly justified. But if poetry is to be a rational evaluation of both intellectual and sensory-emotional experience, the method is inadequate to the poetic purpose.

We take away from "The Soldier" a memory of violence, that is, both poetic shock and emotional shock, and a memory of skilled metrical and aural effects. From "The North Sea Undertaker's Complaint" we take away a memory of purposeful obscurity and a somewhat cheap irony. The metrical structure is accurate, if unsubtle, but the suggestion lingers that the final lines say what they do partly because "phosphorus" and "fire" rime with "Angelus" and "choir."

The poem "After the Surprising Conversions," on the other hand, works with logical and frightening clarity from beginning to end. It uses narrative as its framework in a monologue of letter form. The material derives from a *post script* which Jonathan Edwards appended to a letter on the "surprising conversions" occurring in the mid-eighteenth century. The recipient was Reverend Benjamin Colman, and the added note tells him of the suicide of a "man of some renown," actually the uncle of Edwards. Lowell picks up the phrases and psychology of Edwards and expands with material derived from the narrative proper and from his own imagination. He has Edwards report the deplorable wave of defections from the Church set off by the suicide. As spiritual adviser, he seeks for all the plausible reasons he can find: "He came from melancholy parents," he had "too much or little wit," he took to reading Scripture for himself, "meditated terror, and he seemed / Beyond advice or reason." But finally the minister admits what he considers to be the real cause of the trouble, a *privatio Dei*: "The breath of God had carried out a planned / And sensible withdrawal from this land." The poem ends with the minute and characteristic, but essentially meaningless, scrutiny of nature for symbolic insights which we find in much Puritan writing:

> *September twenty-second, Sir, the bough*
> *Cracks with the unpicked apples, and at dawn*
> *The small-mouth bass breaks water, gorged with spawn.*

The apples are unpicked because the whole town has begun to neglect the Puritan imperative to labor; what the bass means is purely in the

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realm of metaphysical speculation. The real point of the poem is, of course, that there is no room in the theocracy of New England for the person who takes the tenets of Calvinism seriously—that the man who perseveres in pure Calvinistic meditation ends either as a suicide or as a heretic. The form of the poem is the Crashaw couplet—without the irregular line length. At line ends phrases break over violently, and strong masculine rimes are used to define the form despite the run-over. This latter quality at times becomes annoying as a conscious device, but otherwise the structure is firm and the poem as a whole most successful in its revelation of character and theme. Here Lowell employs the means of traditional poetry to achieve a logical and satisfying result.

It would be misleading, however, to leave the impression that in the volume one poem in three is logical and traditional. In the whole volume of forty-two poems, only "Salem," "Children of Light," "At a Bible House," "Charles the Fifth and the Peasant, 1790," "The Ghosts," and "The Fens" can be classified with "After the Surprising Conversions" as largely free from various kinds of obscurity and thoroughly logical in construction. It may be significant that, with one exception, these eight poems are concerned either with anti-Calvinism or with socio-political protest, themes with which Lowell is deeply concerned as a polemicist. Other poems, to be sure, like "As a Plane Tree by the Water," have only a small area of willful obscurantism, or at least of the exploitation of not discernibly logical relationships. But many of the poems are marred to a greater or less degree by the extremely private nature of the concepts employed.

To be fair to Lowell, we must take note, moreover, of the excellence of not a small part of the writing in *Lord Weary's Castle*. A number of poems are, in whole or in part, brilliantly realized. Whole poems which fall into this classification are "The Ghost," a monologue spoken by a dead mistress and derived from Sextus Propertius; "Salem," an *ubi sunt* sonnet that errs only slightly in overdoing its onomatopoeia; "At a Bible House," the portrait of a dying Calvinist; "Mr. Edwards and the Spider," a pyrotechnical handling of a Jonathan Edwards sermon which might be the best poem in the book but for occasional idiosyncrasies; "After the Surprising Conversions," already commented upon; and "Where the Rainbow Ends," an amazing piece of rhetoric which sells itself despite its confusions. Very few of the poems lack some redeeming lines, and sections of other poems are worth mentioning. Whether or not it is derived from W. C. Williams, the second stanza of "New Year's Day" is imposing even when it loses itself in obscurity. Sections IV and VI of "The Quaker Graveyard" are completely successful in what they set out to do. In "Between the Porch and the Altar," a confusing treatment of the Oedipus theme, section III ("Katherine's Dream"), though marred by some abrupt

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shifts in progression, is a highly effective dramatic monologue which gathers commanding power as it works to the end.

Of his technique, we can say that Lowell has, when he chooses to employ it, an effective command of traditional poetic disciplines. Generally, however, he uses traditional rhetorical and verse forms within an experimental structure. He is addicted to violent material, violent juxtaposition, and erratic imagery and figure, all of which often make the relationship between the "what" and the "how" of his poems difficult to discover.

What of the themes? Randall Jarrell says quite accurately that the poems revolt against:

> the Old Law, imperialism, militarism, capitalism, Calvinism, Authority, the Father, the "proper Bostonians," the rich. . . .

What Jarrell does not say is that Lowell's Catholicism is almost entirely equated with this revolt. For Lowell, Catholicism is the negative of every one of these bogeymen except authority—and he is extremely ambivalent in his attitude toward the authority of the Church. Specifically he refers to "the church whose double locks, / Wait for St. Peter, the distorted key." One can hardly avoid the conclusion that Lowell chose the Catholic Church as much to outrage his Calvinistic heritage as for any other reason. He prays to Mary:

> *Mother, for these three hundred years or more*
> *Neither our clippers nor our slavers reached*
> *The haven of your peace in this Bay State:*
> *Neither my father nor his father. . . .*

He is violent and specific in the poem "Children of Light":

> *Our fathers wrung their bread from stocks and stones*
> *And fenced their gardens with the Redman's bones;*
> *Embarking from the Nether Land of Holland,*
> *Pilgrims unhouseled by Geneva's night,*
> *They planted here the Serpent's seeds of light;*
> *And here the pivoting searchlights probe to shock*
> *The riotous glass houses built on rock,*
> *And candles gutter by an empty altar,*
> *And light is where the landless blood of Cain*
> *Is burning, burning the unburied grain.*

"Nether Land of Holland," "unhouseled by Geneva's night," and "Serpent's seeds of light" are all specific and unmistakable identifications of Calvinism with Satan. "Empty altar" denies the validity of the Protestant dispensation; and the two closing lines, still using the light in an ironic sense, indicate that only the power to destroy their own potentiality remains of their once great driving force. A complete revulsion from such a concept of Calvinism would involve either ab-

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solute irreligion or Catholicism. For Lowell's mind, steeped in Christian humanistic values, the only possible choice was Catholicism.[6]

There is evidence to support this analysis. When we turn to the poems treating directly with religious subjects, we are struck by the negativism of the poetry. Here are the concluding lines of three meditations:

O Christ, the spiralling years
Slither with child and manger to a ball
Of ice; and what is man? We tear our rags
To hang the furies by their itching ears,
And the green needles nail us to the wall.

*

And lion-taming Satan bows and loops
His cracking tail into a hangman's noose;
He is the only happy man in Lent.
He laughs into my face until I cry.

*

On Ninth Street, through the Hallowe'en's soaped glass,
I picked at an old bone on two crossed sticks
And found, to Via et Vita et Veritas
A stray dog's signpost is a crucifix.

These come, respectively, from "Christmas in Black Rock," "The First Sunday in Lent," and "The Crucifix." Jarrell states that the poems are all built upon the basic struggle between what is "closed, turned inward, incestuous, that blinds or binds," and what is "free and open, that grows or is willing to change . . . , the realm of freedom, of the Grace that has replaced the Law, of the perfect liberator whom the poet calls Christ." Jarrell is basically correct in this analysis, but he overdoes his conclusion that Lowell's emphasis is on the "open" rather than the "closed." The prophet of man's imminent doom speaks more loudly than the guide to the new light. Even the poems which attempt a positive solution do it less than half-heartedly. "Christmas Eve under Hooker's Statue," a most effective Jeremiad, piles up bitterness upon bitterness: "How the long horn of plenty broke like glass / In Hooker's gauntlets," "I ask for bread, my father gives me mould," "Where is the summer garden? In its bed / The ancient speckled serpent will appear." All it can offer at the end is: "But we are old, our fields are running wild: / Till Christ again turn wanderer and child." "Where the Rainbow Ends," the concluding and summarizing poem, gathers

[6] Jarrell's explanation is simpler: "The poet's rather odd and imaginative Catholicism is thoroughly suitable to his mind, which is so traditional, theocentric, and anthropomorphic that no images from the sciences, next to none from philosophy, occur in his poems. Such a Catholicism is thoroughly suited to literature, since it is essentially literary, anthropomorphic, emotional." This seems unfair to Lowell, Catholicism, and literature.

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together almost all the major themes and points them to the question: "What can the dove of Jesus give / You now but wisdom, exile?" The answer is the nearest thing to a positive statement that Lowell can make: "Stand and live, / The dove has brought an olive branch to eat." Jarrell interprets this:

> The dove of Jesus brings to the worshipper the olive branch that shows him that the flood has receded, opening the whole earth for him; it is the olive branch of peace and reconciliation, the olive branch that he is "to eat" as a symbol of the eaten flesh of Christ, of atonement, identification, and liberation.

Even if this hyperbolic expansion of the figure is indicated, it does not balance the deadly weight of the particulars of the whole poem—and it is hard to believe that Lowell does not know that olives eaten from the branch are painfully bitter.

Lowell is a serious, intelligent, gifted, and powerful—albeit sometimes misguided—poet. He is basically a poet of revolt, and that revolt is specifically directed against the Calvinism of his heritage, which he identifies with the Old Law of the Hebraic dispensation, and against all the historical, social, political, and economic patterns of a New-England-led America. But, like the Saxon who could denounce the conquerors only by learning the Norman language—and thereby began to be Normanized—, Lowell adopts the "poetic vocabulary" and the habits of mind of the opposition. He leans toward organization by reverie and association, the acceptance of a solipsistic universe, which is the ultimate product of the disappearance of God from the Ockhamist-Calvinist conception of being. In his denial of Calvinistic total depravity, predestinarianism, and faith without works, he does not reach the affirmation of Aristotelian-Thomistic reason, freedom, and individual responsibility. He does not find the joy of the risen Christ, nor the emancipation of rational Christianity. He has not escaped the tragic Christ and the voluntaristic universe of Calvin.

To the "whom seek ye in the sepulchre" of the angel, he has answered, "Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified." But he has not yet heard the message of the angel nor yet learned to sing the "Alleluia, resurrexit Dominus!"

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REVIEWS

MARVIN MUDRICK

The Broken Image of Magnanimity[1]

IN A PECULIARLY contemporary sense, Milton is the scholar's poet. Ever since, some thirty years ago, literary scholarship staked its impressive claim on him, mining operations have proceeded in the confident assumption that Milton is the poet who by the scholarly discursiveness of his doctrine most persistently exacts them, and by the magnitude of his achievement justifies their collectively heroic exhaustiveness. It was predictable and proper, therefore, that a community of scholars —Professors Tillyard, Lewis, Bush, Allen, Stein, *et al.*—should have risen with embattled unanimity against Mr. Eliot's early incidental comments and his first essay on Milton, which together make up the first alarming challenge to Milton's reputation since the eighteenth century. Meanwhile the mining operations continue: studies of Milton's theology (orthodox, heterodox, heretical), his politics, his reading (classical, rabbinical, occult), his Puritanism, his Renaissance humanism, and of course his "personality."

Mr. West's patient book is about Milton's angelology, and it brings to light another block of possible sources for Miltonic doctrine in the great puzzling poem that asserted man's last epic vision of the cosmos. The facts—as they are brought to light and order—of Revolutionary and Counter-Revolutionary England, and of Milton's convictions stiffening against moral and political earthquakes, uncomfortably often converge toward the impression that Milton's work, stuffed with convictions and demanding assent, was done barely—perhaps not quite—in the nick of time, by an imperial rigor of will. It was, for instance, as Mr. West shows (and as readers have been known to feel), rather late in the day for Milton's angels. Angelology, by the date of *Paradise Lost*, was at its term as a serious concern of the English philosophical mind. Under fire from the anti-Scholastic skepticisms of Puritan austerity and of the new empirical science, the faith and the detailed interest in so baroque a topic of speculative theology were beginning to break down. The seventeenth-century angelologists on whom Milton probably drew—Henry More, Robert Fludd, the Puritans Henry Lawrence and Isaac Ambrose—were at the very end of the line. By the turn of the century, angelology—not only

[1] MILTON AND THE ANGELS, by *Robert H. West*. University of Georgia Press. $4.50. AN ANATOMY OF MILTON'S VERSE, by *W. B. C. Watkins*. Louisiana State University Press. $3.00. IKON: JOHN MILTON AND THE MODERN CRITICS, by *Robert Martin Adams*. Cornell University Press. $3.75.

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in England but on the Continent—was dead, except as antiquarianism or the isolated preoccupation of an occasional religious eccentric.

The sense of convictions held by main force penetrates all of Milton's major verse, especially *Paradise Lost*; to expose and rationalize these convictions, so obviously Milton's own aim, has inevitably seemed the necessary aim of Milton scholars; and Mr. West does his part by demonstrating—persuasively enough to meet the more literal objections of Dr. Johnson and of many others since—a degree of rationalizable eclectic consistency in Milton's angelology, borrowed, improvised, and deliberately original. Milton's angels are, then, broadly in the tradition of Puritan angelology, of which the crucial article, for Milton's poem, concerns angelic substance:

> . . . his idea in *Paradise Lost* of the angelic substance seems to suit the Puritan compromise on the angel as in some sense bodily, though of a body almost spirit. In addition to these explicit agreements with Puritan doctrine Milton seems also to have in *Paradise Lost* the Puritan indifference to speculation more detailed than piety calls for; he does not care exactly how angels control the fancy, or what the orders are, or what precisely the substance—once it is conceded to be inferior to God's, superior to ours, hence immortal, invisible, and swift, yet in some senses bodily, best described as like that of the highest heaven.

Even Milton's "originality" seems to inhere chiefly in the characteristic knotted muscularity of argumentative explicitness with which he insists both on this materiality of angelic substance (as opposed to the Thomist hypothesis that angels are pure spirit) and on the primacy and goodness of matter in general: an image of the universe as body evolving back toward the Creator with its powers and satisfactions as body not rejected but rather refined and multiplied.

> Milton was committed . . . to paint earth the shadow of heaven (or really the other way around) and things therein each to other like more than most angelologists granted. Matter is good, he had said; so its proper functions are good—all of them. As matter is present throughout the scale of creatures, so its functions are practised by them all, each according to his own form. The form of angels is not suitable to procreation, but it is suited in eminence to any kind of joy that man can know. . . .

Doctrinally at least, this takes care of angelic eating and love-making: Milton, as Mr. West remarks, "was not the man to hold back upon a mere point of delicacy"; and he concludes that Milton "has not bungled his angels." Mr. West is in fact persuasive to the limit of his thesis, though one may wish to consider how doctrinal consistency—angelological and otherwise—works in the poem, and whether what he describes (only to deny it) as Milton's "gratuitous determination

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to meet every 'awkward question' head on" is consistent with the discretions of poetic structure.

Not that analytical criticism, which might be expected to take up such questions, has had much luck with Milton. Mr. Watkins goes through the motions of "exploring" Milton's "imagery and verbal practice," quoting often and at length with attendant specific enthusiasms; but his evidence has a way of skidding off his assertions as if he is not quite sure of the meaning of either. So, encountering the commonplace about Milton's deficiency of visual imagination, he categorically affirms Milton's "extraordinary sensuous range," declines to "defend" his visual imagery (bowing in a footnote to Professor Allen's "cogent" and presumably door-shutting defense based on "Renaissance theories of light and light symbolism with which Milton was conversant"), invites us rather to "consider the extraordinary role of the eye in his poetry," and thereupon cites a number of passages in which Milton *mentions* the eye and the act of seeing (his poetry "is ablaze with eyes from beginning to end"):

> As the most obviously expressive human feature he uses it constantly to characterize. At the very *sight* of Christ, wild beasts grow mild. Adam has an *eye sublime*, declaring absolute rule. In God's face divine compassion, mercy, and justice *visibly* appear . . .

and so on. He remarks on Milton's "plastic and symbolical use of sound," points out that for Milton "Invariably, discord is associated with hostile forces; harmony, with God and goodness and the divine order," uneasily concedes that "such symbolism is traditional," and goes on to cite pages of redundant dubious evidence that Milton's "use of it is remarkably original": "clashing discord, like a harsh, physically painful Wagnerian motive, accompanies rebellion against God even in Heaven." We learn that Milton's verse "is full of the physical sensation of inhaling and exhaling": "As long as we form words, we are consciously alive; elaborate choice makes us creatively alive. *Spirit* is from *spiritus* (breath)." This quality of earnest and somewhat incoherent platitude is pervasive: excerpts fail to do it justice.

Mr. Watkins has at his service, also, a startling naïveté:

> The real sense of the awesome depth of Satan's fall from on high comes from the *time* it took him to fall and to recover from his ensuing daze. Hephaestus when thrown out of Jove's heaven fell a whole summer's day before landing. But as for Satan and his crew, *nine days they fell* [italics Mr. Watkins']. Even if we do not think in terms of thirty-two-feet-per-second every second, we have all acquired in infancy a realistic enough sense of falling speed to grasp the awful implied distance.

Mr. Watkins observes that when Adam accepts Eve "Immediately the verse takes on the lyrical quality of epithalamion and a Tennysonian

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lilt" (as, doubtless, in the balcony scene Shakespeare achieves a Keatsian richness). "Surprisingly," he declares, "diffidence lies behind much of Milton's aggressive masculinity." Finally, Mr. Watkins has a habit of dropping portentous names into the flagging conversation:

> But Sodom and Gomorrah, so prominent in Proust's portrait of social decay, which Joyce in turn transforms into the tragi-comedy of infant chatter about those "bad pities of the plain" (*F. W.*, 564) are in Milton's nightmare only incidental to the monstrous distortions of normal sex in the classic human crime—incest, doubled in Satan and Sin, Sin and Death.

This sort of rag-picker's poetizing—rummaging in the work of a great poet as a pretext for hurling scraps of awe, etymology, "wisdom," irrelevant allusion, and irresponsible rhetoric at a captive audience—has a long tradition among scholars at play. It is too bad that Mr. Watkins has been lured into it, because he can do much better, particularly when he feels no obligation to be enthusiastic.

The last third of his book treats those of Milton's poems about which he has reservations, *Comus* and *Paradise Regained*; the reservations concern Milton's efforts in the poems to clarify and reconcile his attitudes toward passion and reason; and, though Mr. Watkins has nothing strikingly new to say about what has seemed, to other readers also, the radical split between the professed and the implicit in both poems, he does make the case with care and effective illustration. The Lady in *Comus*, like Christ in *Paradise Regained*, is too expressly unsusceptible to be a dramatic or a sympathetic figure; at the same time, both—Christ especially—betray Milton's discomfort of personal renunciation by the "passages of deep hostility" they are made to direct against the ideas of plenitude and fertility, and—in the person of Christ—even against classical learning and the powers of the poet:

> Passion, refusing to be exorcised, goes berserk, turning against itself as well as reason. . . . Denying temptation so savagely only demonstrates its force; thus the real drama of . . . [*Paradise Regained*] is unpremeditated, incidental, and uncontrolled.

One may in fact go farther, to suggest that the real drama of *all* of Milton's major poems is, in the same way if not to the same degree, unpremeditated, incidental, and uncontrolled; that Milton is always his own hero and villain irrespective of the immediate exigencies of his poem; that the ease with which his energetic ideas—about angels or chastity or temptation—submit to being amputated from his energetic words (as well as the difficulty of finding in the words something more than imposing aggregations of sound to which ideas more or less imposing and not necessarily self-consistent may be attached) testifies to a disorder of spirit more personal and shattering than any *Zeitgeist* dissociation of sensibility.

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This disorder has been variously noted and named by A. J. A. Waldock, Dr. Leavis, and Mr. Eliot; and Mr. Adams works his way through almost the length of his witty china-smashing polemic—laying about him at source-hunters, "overreading" analytical critics, Jungians, and "he-hee" textualists[2] as well as at Messrs. Waldock, Eliot, and Leavis—before he settles with no apparent sense of inconsistency on a stance *vis-à-vis* Milton very similar to those taken by the three dissidents he has just left off belaboring. By the time he gets to them, however, he may have grown so adept at giving forty whacks to every Milton critic in the neighborhood as to be inattentive to large areas of agreement.

Examinations of *Comus*—that most gloomily pawed-over of non-epic and non-dramatic poems—will never be the same now that Mr. Adams, genially outfitted with sources to meet the annotators and with plain sense to confound the "Byzantine ingenuity" of metaphor-mongers, has undermined Professor Woodhouse's "classic" reading—

> Valid support for ideas which are only adumbrated in a text may always be sought by appeals to related material; but here we are asked to import bodily, without any textual authority at all, ideas expressed by Milton in another context eight years later and ideas expressed by people other than Milton. This procedure seems unwarranted.

the serpentine preciosities of Brooks and Hardy—

> For every beauty which one uncovers on esoteric assumptions (and it is both odd and significant how little Brooks and Hardy make of beauty, how indifferent they seem to be whether they uncover an anagram, a pun, a grotesque fault in taste, or a relevant harmony), one sacrifices a half-dozen of the larger elegancies for which *Comus* really exists. The fault of overreading is pervasive, it corrupts everything and will sacrifice even its own best perceptions for the glare and tinsel of a bit of false wit.

and the grad-school anxiety of Professor Allen that Milton is being unfaithful to his sources—

> . . . if he altered Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of Sabrina, the changes may indeed "bother those who have the original history in their heads" . . . so firmly that they cannot get it out; but these people would be bothered, too, by Shakespeare's liberties, in *Hamlet*, with Saxo Grammaticus.

The Jungians—especially Professors Lewis and Stein—can hardly

[2] Much solemn dust has been kicked up about Milton's orthographic distinction between "emphatic" and "unemphatic" uses of pronouns ("he-hee," "she-shee," *etc.*); and modern editions of Milton have plumed themselves on their "accuracy" in maintaining or restoring the distinction. Mr. Adams shows that the distinction holds exclusively in the minds of the editors.

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be happy about Mr. Adams' sardonic candor in explicating the text of their discreetly proposed image of Paradise as a womb (its approach is a "steep hill" with "hairie sides," and the entrance is "on th'other side"); and his discussion of the role of archetypes in literature is a valuable corrective to the Jungian nuisance:

> What this archetypal figure, the lowest common denominator of Satan and Prometheus, actually amounts to is something like a stock figure, the brave rebel, who takes his place with other stock figures like the melancholy lover, the disobedient son, the greedy parasite, the braggart soldier, and so on. These figures undeniably have a general appeal and are found widely diffused in the literature of the world. A number of common experiences are summarized in them, their quality is evident to the most untutored capacity, the simplest sort of abstraction is capable of producing them; whether one wants to call them "archetypes" or some equally pretentious name is plainly a matter of taste. But one thing is clear; a literature wholly composed of these stereotypes would be largely devoid of that unusual literary energy which archetypes are often invoked to explain. In fact, one need not phrase the matter in the conditional at all; there are plenty of treatments of the Prometheus theme so tritely flat or conventionally bombastic as to make it abundantly evident that this particular archetype flourishes only in conjunction with literary talent of a high order. Why, then, cannot critics hold the literary talent responsible for the literary product, without the *ex post facto* benediction of an archetype?

When Mr. Adams turns to his own appreciation of Milton, he speaks discriminatingly of Milton's "peculiar personal delight in exuberant, luxuriant exfoliation"; of his "baroque esthetic" that solicits "sportive ornamentation, far in excess and even in defiance of function strictly defined"; and of the Miltonic diction, which, though "properly speaking 'no language,' " is yet "more rich, complex, extended, and resourceful than English traditionally is," and "so muscular and energetic in its contrasted reaching and controlling, as actually to give the sense of compression." The appreciation is always somewhat baffled by its patent impulse, and equally patent inability, to make a wholly unequivocal gesture of admiration—a bafflement that may explain Mr. Adams' curious petulance toward critics who express, with less affection than he, the same sense of Milton's formidable shortcomings.

Mr. Adams takes exception, for example, to a judgment which, after a consideration of the violent idiosyncrasies of Milton's style, Mr. Eliot offers in his second essay, that "as a poet" Milton is "probably the greatest of all eccentrics"; but Mr. Adams himself observes that Milton's style is "a creation which goes against the essential grain of English by fulfilling and overfulfilling certain special potentialities of the tongue."

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He is severe with Dr. Leavis's animadversions on the comparative poverty of effect within the remarkable control of Milton's grand style; and, recognizing that Mr. Eliot's second essay on Milton is no recantation at all but rather a precise qualifying of the earlier essay, he duly ridicules the related comment on Milton's "inerrancy, conscious or unconscious, in writing so as to make the best display of his talents, and the best concealment of his weaknesses." A moment later he is conceding, with no sense of concession (surely an epic poet is all we can ask for?), that Milton's style is suited only to the epic and the heroic, modes to which, consciously or unconsciously, he chose to restrict himself; that, as in Mr. Lewis's formulation, the epic style is "narrative, didactic, rhetorical, continuously elevated, and directly exemplary; it cannot go very far in the direction of becoming colloquial or witty or social without ceasing to be epic"; that if it seems deficient in variety to *us*, we may blame the omissions of an educational system that failed to bring us up on classical heroic verse.

One may still wonder to which major epic poets Mr. Lewis's formulation applies besides Virgil and Milton, to whose limitations it seems suspiciously tailored; certainly not to Homer or Dante. If Mr. Adams (or Mr. Lewis) argues that Milton's style is "heroic" and "sublime," and therefore acutely limited in its effects, then one would like to know in what ways it is more sublime than the antipodal but equally sublime styles of *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, unless perhaps as Milton's style is sublimity pure and simple, with no admixture or possible modulation except into bathos: "No fear lest dinner cool." And behind the smokescreen of unadmitted admissions is Mr. Adams' refusal to acknowledge that both Mr. Eliot and Dr. Leavis accept without question the unique if flawed greatness of Milton; that what both are combating is the obstinate academic image (which Mr. Adams himself rejects) of the twin peaks, Shakespeare and Milton, the former more verdurous perhaps but the latter quite as lofty if not in fact loftier.

With similar disingenuousness Mr. Adams dismisses as critically invalid Mr. Waldock's comment on the discrepancy—which Mr. Adams grants—between Milton's presentation of and his "editorializing" about Satan. Indeed he misrepresents the comment as an appeal for "fair play" in the characterization of Satan, though Mr. Waldock declares and demonstrates that he is only exemplifying Milton's often unsuccessful effort to correct the drift of his words away from the curb of his conscious intentions. Consider, then, Mr. Adams' own remarks on this issue: Milton's "style does not fully adapt itself to the subject" but rather "sometimes tries to dominate the subject"; he "wrote from beliefs which constantly surpassed or evaded the formal categories of his art, so that his great literary achievements, like those of Ibsen and Flaubert, Euripides and Swift, end rather in a stalemate than in a fully resolved stasis"; "No matter how one manipulates them, there

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remains something strident and inflexible about many of Milton's ideas, something buried and beyond control about many of his feelings." If one would not feel it inhumane, because of his allegiance to Milton, to keep reminding him of his solidarity with these ostensible antagonists, one might accuse Mr. Adams of ingratitude.

The allegiance, nevertheless, is genuine, profound, and continuously (if at times perversely) intelligent, and—as with many Miltonists—it is as much an allegiance to the man as to his work; so that Mr. Adams, turning the tables neatly enough on those who admire "personalities" and "temperaments" and word-toying in more fashionable poets, can with humorous exasperation reduce Milton for a moment to this:

> The poet likes words because they are things, it may be said, and the multiplication of them is pleasing to him in itself. This view puts the whole burden of eccentricity on Milton the individual; his style is good because it expresses his temperament, and if our temperament is not Milton's, so much the worse for us.

But the Milton he proposes finally is the poet as the (however imperfect) image of his own best view of man:

> Milton's style as a whole is ultimately answerable, I believe, only to a concept of his self, to an image of a magnanimous man which he formed and tried to embody. This image is larger and more determining than any of the particulars of action, belief, or artistry which comprise it; without the personal image, indeed, these particulars do not coalesce at all.

We come back always to the man and his ideas, suspended with tantalizing accessibility somewhere in the marble resonances of the verse, and most magnetic to the scholar, the historian of ideas, the partisan; as for example they were to Coleridge, Milton's most eloquent partisan:

> He was, as every truly great poet has ever been, a good man; but finding it impossible to realize his own aspirations, either in religion or politics, or society, he gave up his heart to the living spirit and light within him, and avenged himself on the world by enriching it with the record of his own transcendent ideal.

To command without absurdity this fineness of allegiance is a sufficient measure of greatness; even though the avenging spirit can turn, with disconcerting fluency, vindictive and picayune, and the image of light and magnanimity—however magnificently invoked—is never whole.

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SEYMOUR KRIM

Whitman and His Critics

THESE FOUR volumes[1] commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* and reflect the rather sophisticated view which qualified observers have now formed of Whitman and his book. With the exception of Mr. Allen's very comfortably written and fully realized biography, which despite certain small errors or omissions is likely the most detailed life of the poet now in existence, there is general agreement that Whitman was hardly the person he claimed to be. Since his personality is so marvelously (depending upon one's taste) intrusive in his work, indeed is part of the subject-matter of almost every poem, this agreed-upon observation leads our critics to spend time and space upon the job of unmasking the poet in order to portray his actual features. Acute discomfort for Whitman lovers would seem to be in store—if they are credulous. To choose an obvious example of this method, Mr. Clark points out that, factually speaking, Whitman had little compassion for either Negroes, Indians or the Irish Catholic immigrants in 19th Century New York, and that his democratic rhetoric is falsely inflated when compared with his personal prejudices. This is merely one fact among many concerning the disparity between Whitman's enunciations and his spotted private life, but it indicates the manner of approach which most of these present-day writers adopt as normal procedure. As such it is interesting because it is in such decisive contrast to earlier biographical-critical writing which often took Whitman at his own word—especially the works by early admirers like William O'Connor, John Burroughs and Dr. Maurice Bucke, and even less partial writers. It is true that Whitman was severely criticized when he arrived on the scene, and that strong distaste for his work abated only slowly, and in some isolated cases not at all up to this very day; but it is only now that such a general skepticism has become a necessary attitude for assessing his personality and relating it to the work. Much is known about Whitman that was confused or unorganized before, and under the lens of this knowledge his personal weaknesses tend to glare in contrast to his pretensions. Certainly it would be an unrealistic critic who did not consider these facts or attempted to ignore them—his more or less established homosexuality (although its physical gratification has never been proved),

[1] LEAVES OF GRASS ONE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER, edited by *Milton Hindus*. Stanford University Press. $5.00. WALT WHITMAN'S CONCEPT OF THE AMERICAN COMMON MAN, by *Leadie M. Clark*. Philosophical Library. $3.75. THE SOLITARY SINGER, by *Gay Wilson Allen*. Macmillan. $8.00. WALT WHITMAN RECONSIDERED, by *Richard Chase*. Sloane. $3.75.

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the untruthfulness about aspects of his private life, or (where biography and criticism must join, as in the cases of Proust and Montaigne) the wish-fulfillment of his personality in his poetry which gives the man himself the appearance of a buckskin colossus, and induces the emotional reader to believe that the author is superhuman in his mortal affairs. These and related extravagances are coolly pierced, or suspiciously considered, by the critics before us and it is a sobering reminder that critical literature even more than love or war spares no one and nothing in its march towards the truth. Would that its insight equalled its capacity for destructiveness, but there we get into such delicate matters as the individual critic's capacity for justice and his conception of the meaning of life, and of literature: ultimate issues, unfortunately, but when criticism is ambitious and the artist is as openly ambitious as Whitman it is only a writer of the utmost tact who can resist raising them.

One of the least shy in this approach is the brilliant, faulty and neon-lit Leslie Fiedler, who contributes the most unusual essay to Milton Hindus' *Leaves of Grass One Hundred Years After.* Mr. Fiedler, aware of all the weaknesses in Whitman's personal life, and outwardly contemptuous of his strength, attributes whatever great virtues the poet may have to his charlatanism, which endows his work with its "wit and tension." It is the naïve who are taken in by the appearance of sincerity, or the rough speech of a primal bard; this is a "mannerist device," according to Fiedler, "subtle and witty," and to the critic the usual picture of Whitman is equally misleading and the least interesting quality about him. To wit:

> It is not to the life-affirmer we are returning, but to the elegiac Whitman, the poet of death. . . . Dismayed by an optimism in which we no longer believe, a self-assurance that seems to us obscene, we find with relief in *Leaves of Grass* that "blackness ten times black" which Melville once thrilled to discover in Hawthorne. . . . It is his attackers who have defined for us the Whitman we can love. . . . How different the meaning of what such critics have found is for us than it was for them! Discovering among Whitman's papers the cardboard butterfly with which he faked the famous portrait; learning that the untainted American family of which he liked to boast was ridden with madness and disease; finding a host of proofs that the New Orleans love affair, the vaunted bastards were deliberate hoaxes—his debunkers were ready to write off Walt as "insincere." To them this seemed to destroy his validity as a poet-prophet, to reveal him as "only" a self-advertiser, a poseur, not original or a Democrat or even a lusty breeder. But those of us who know that poetry (God forbid that we should attempt to judge the *man*!) is precisely a matter of cardboard butterflies on real fingers, that the wit and tension of a poem depend on the distance between the given

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> and the imagined, are grateful to [his critics] for having rescued Walt Whitman from "life" (i.e., the clichés of politics and pseudo mysticism) and having restored him to art. Our Walt Whitman is the slyest of artificers, the artificer of "sincerity," and if this sounds like a joke, there is no reason why even the greatest poetry cannot be a joke on someone, not excluding its author. . . . Whitman's trickery is essential, not accidental, to his poems. Like the mannerists, like Shakespeare, who is the greatest among them, he is a player with illusion; his center is a pun on the self; his poetry is a continual shimmering on the surfaces of concealment and revelation that is at once pathetic and comical.

Mr. Fiedler's essay is quoted from at length because it takes to an illogical but challenging extreme the "new look" at Whitman, using as a source for criticism both the biographical revelations referred to before—the most sensational of them—and a peculiarly contemporary, and callous, refinement of taste towards poetry. Although I do not believe this is a just or even ultimately illuminating essay, it is certainly the freshest in Mr. Hindus' collection and is recommended in its own right as a *succès de scandal.* The rest of the Hindus book displays a variety of points of view, ranging from the moderate and reasonably balanced essay of David Daiches to one of Kenneth Burke's laboratory reports on Whitman's key words, where the factual illumination is all but lost beneath the intellectual sport, or mental gymnastics, of the method. If one is patient with Mr. Burke's machinery, however, and not sensitive or bothered when he appears to parody himself with innumerable asides, the closeness of his investigation focuses attention on Whitman's method and unconscious repetition, apparently, of maternal imagery. This is interesting, but not worth the elaborateness of the approach to a general reader like myself, who was led to believe that Mr. Burke would go beyond tabulation and description with the slightly awesome intellectual techniques which he seems to have at his disposal, and whose only objective justification is that the reader profit from their utilization. This is not quite the case, as I suspect other readers have felt before, and one has the uneasy reaction that Mr. Burke has become the victim of his own resources to the extent that he must follow their dictates even after the cause has been won thrice over. A good-natured, interminable, intermittently revealing and heavily German piece of work is his offering; I doubt if I shall remember a word of it; and if that is the present writer's limitation it may nevertheless persuade Mr. Burke to reflect on a more consolidated use of his evident pleasure in intellectual sleuthing.

As a whole, Mr. Hindus' collection of essays—including those by himself, William Carlos Williams (a concrete tribute to Whitman as a user of language and rhythm in the American grain, as opposed to

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the English, which is detracted from by edged references to T. S. Eliot), Richard Chase and J. Middleton Murry—is a well-intentioned and interesting book, although there appears to be something arbitrary about the writers whom Hindus has gathered together. Why them and not so-and-so? the reader might legitimately ask, for the book does not quite cohere and fulfills its purpose of celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the *Leaves* in a grey fashion. But perhaps this is because serious contemporary opinion is so undecided about its final attitude towards the book, finding Whitman not especially operative today as a pertinent poetic or social influence, and yet not removed enough to allow for a calm esthetic and moral appreciation. Significantly enough it is the "engaged" American critics who twist and squirm uncomfortably while the two foreigners who partake in this symposium are much more direct in their appreciation and less personally harsh in their criticism, whatever other limitations they display. Mr. Hindus however is to be congratulated again for the sincerity of his beliefs (proved before in his awkwardly truthful little book on Celine, *The Crippled Giant*, and the suggestiveness of his announced *Confessions of a Young Jew*) and sense of literary responsibility in organizing this venture.

Richard Chase's *Walt Whitman Reconsidered* is a serious, in several ways original critical study which is unappetizingly written, invoking a forest of ideas and impressive literary names which testifies to Mr. Chase's being "up" on everything, even "ahead" in some areas, but which suffers from attempting too much in too short a space and surfeits the reader with both general and abstract thought. Chase, who has apparently read enormously, peppers practically every sentence with a literary-intellectual comparison of Whitman's virtues and temperamental proclivities to those of other great writers from Ovid to the present. In addition, he is not sparing in the use of references to history, psychoanalysis, anthropology and philosophy as aids to his illumination; there is such a tissue of this synthesized knowledge that the reader sometimes feels that he is being given a triple-dosed correspondence course in contemporary critical-literary sources rather than a specific and memorable analysis of Whitman. What Mr. Chase can undeniably do is widen one's notions of the uniqueness of the poet by relating him to the literary assumptions of his time and to predecessors and inheritors, with Joyce unexpectedly among the latter. As a critic he is keen on integrating Whitman into cultural history rather than emphasizing where the poet changed it; this telescopic vision allows us to see the author with historical perspective, but often his special qualities become stolen from him because of Mr. Chase's concern to absorb them in intellectual common denominators chosen from literature and history that match the pluralism of his own mind and support his analysis. Thus the critic is not always convincing, or incisive, in particulars because the tendency of his thinking is to ransack as many

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sources as he can for intellectual experience that has the complex stamp of contemporary approval and to fit Whitman into these categories. His Whitman can be seen as both symbolist and "alienated artist" among other things, depending on how Mr. Chase turns him under the light of a too-literal modern sensibility; while interesting arguments can be made for each of these concepts they reveal more explicitly habits of a modern critical mind which finds assurance and value in such attitudes, and has a tendency to flatten out the past so that it can receive the image of a too italicized present-day awareness. This takes the form of abstract generalizations which attempt to organize isolated aspects of experience into illuminating concepts—such phrases as "the American pastoral myth" and "the symbol-seeking capacity of the Puritan-transcendentalist mind" and "the American elegiac sensibility" give an example of the verbal broadness of Chase's approach and a suggestion of the specific truths that evade capture when such general outlines are imposed on experience. His generalizations become "signs" for actuality, notable for their suggestiveness, but often disemboweling experience of its recalcitrant specificity so that only the shell of truth is usable, its innards left behind. Mr. Chase writes, for example:

> Whitman had it somewhat easier than Melville or Mark Twain. Neurotic, riven and vividly paradoxical as his personality was, many of the conflicting elements were subsumable under his monumental inertia and placidity, which allowed him to live more at rest than they in nineteenth century America.

Apropos Whitman's "monumental placidity," here is Mark Van Doren's comment on it:

> (He was) one of those persons whose organs and tissues are chronically in a state of abnormal excitement, who tremble and quiver when the rest of us are merely conscious that we are being interested or pleased.

Thus you have another version of the same fact, which qualifies Mr. Chase's generalization and if followed to its ultimate conclusion questions the assertion (of doubtful value to begin with) that Whitman had it "easier" than the other two Big Names in the Chase canon. (Mr. Chase, innocently enough, but often gratuitously, is an intellectual name-dropper of the fiercest kind.) The above example of the critic's use of partial truth was quoted to give the reader an indication that for all the breadth of his intellectual approach, likely because of it, Mr. Chase is not always convincing with concrete particulars. He is ultimately too abstract for this reviewer's taste or ability to learn lastingly from him. And despite the fact that he appears to be an almost formidably intelligent person, his writing, as such, is not distinguished by the gift for memorable and original expression. After putting down

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such a book as this one sometimes wishes a bit ruefully that the labor of reading it could be repaid by the addition to one's mind of its best features. But for that to happen there would have had to be a quieter, more modest approach than Mr. Chase deemed suitable, one that might have seemed less significant but would have meant more to this particular reader. Mr. Chase might consider the wisdom in the lines of the poet Walt Whitman, not as meticulous a moralist as Hawthorne, nor as profound as Herman Melville or Emily Dickinson, sometimes compared because of "Song of Myself" with Goethe (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*), Rousseau (*Confessions*), and Wordsworth (*Prelude*), who had a native humor, when it is not meditative or elegiac, equivalent to what Nietzsche praised as the "presto" style and found preeminently in the French-Latin temperament of Stendhal, and who once wrote:

> This hour I tell things in confidence,
> I might not tell everybody but I will tell you.

I wish Mr. Chase had told me, and not tried to write the history of the world in 186 pages.

We come now to the two entirely factual books of the four under discussion, both of which are more definite in their goals and hence easier to consider. Leadie Clark's *Walt Whitman's Concept of the American Common Man* makes plain what modern readers of Whitman have suspected for some time, that the poet was more concerned with the best features of the "common man" as a democratic ideal than with loving each and every manifestation of ignorance and banality. Mr. Clark gives the impression that Whitman was a bit of a faker because of his prejudices against minorities, labor unions, radical politics and other special-interest groups of common men. The fact remains that Whitman was oddly conservative in order to consolidate and express his vision of the fundamental originality of the United States as a political and social entity new to the world, and therefore offering new humane possibilities for both individual and social happiness. It is not very disillusioning to learn, at this late date, that the poet was in certain areas bigoted, effeminate, "half educated," romantic (unrealistic), and not a completely unqualified lover of all. Leadie Clark appears to think that the clear establishment of Whitman's defections invalidates in crucial ways his reputation as a poet and originator of a native style; perhaps this is so if one goes to Whitman for literal guidance, either in politics, literature or philosophy. But one does not after the end of student days. One goes to him, in my opinion, for the most self-evident reasons—because he had a great heart, a great voice, a great personality and it all added up to his becoming a great writer of a special, heroic sort. But then, again, it is a matter of balance and emphasis as to how much research of this sort influences the judgment one finally has of an author. If one has

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suspected all along, as did this reviewer, that Whitman's autobiography is full of flaws on the fleshly level, and further felt that his "real" self and permanent one is what is recorded in *Leaves of Grass*, the Clark book has a restricted and special place. In a unique way, Whitman does not seem to suffer for personal exposure because he anticipates it and prepares us for it by the deliberate leeway he gives to himself in his book: any number of "secrets" could be uncovered that would easily fit into the places he has left open for them, and his personal suffering over concealment is more painful and portentous than the uncovering of any fact could be.

By far the most rewarding of all the books under consideration is Gay Wilson Allen's mature critical biography, *The Solitary Singer*, which has all the appearance of being a life-work. It is probably the most detailed and accurate biography of the poet which is now in existence, and is distinguished by its straightforward and highly responsible manner of presentation. In contrast to writers like Fiedler and Chase, Mr. Allen is old-fashioned in his ideas, for he sticks almost solely to fact rather than speculation, and his critical insights are neither as sharp nor as provocative as the younger writers'. But Mr. Allen's book has been made to last in a deliberate, tested way; every fact is documented, and the criticism is used selectively because of Allen's primary intention to do complete justice to the life. This he does, and evidences of the biographer's character and resolution show through the firm construction of the book and the objective reality that it assumes as one reads it. Mr. Allen's style is unobtrusive, perhaps "neutral" is the more accurate word, and occasionally it wants brilliance at climactic moments and finish at others; but like all good narrative writing the prose itself becomes merely the entrance to the reality of the story, and its factual impressiveness never flags (if you are interested in the subject) because of the enormous research that has gone into it and the natural way it is presented. One essential fact that is brought to life by Allen is the closeness of Whitman to his family, his mother in particular, and the almost dutiful way in which he worried about and tried to ameliorate their lives throughout his own arduous one. It is quite unexpected and impressive, and serves to bring Whitman back to commonplace sources which relax the exotic aspects stressed by other of our writers and make evident how much he drew upon family life in constructing images of national fraternity. One might say that Mr. Allen has humanized Whitman without sentimentality and without making unverifiable inferences, despite his deep familiarity with his subject. Where Mr. Chase is abstract, he is as concrete as Tolstoy and indeed his book rolls along in as agreeable and convincing a way. Mr. Allen is not as ambitious, nor as intellectually imaginative, a critic as Chase; but as a biographer he has fulfilled a subject obviously of deep importance to himself that transcends his limitations and already has the look, and substance, of "a lion in the path" for future work on Whitman.

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IRVING SINGER

Literary Truth

IN WHAT SENSE can a work of literature "tell" us about the world, and how can this *telling* be aesthetically relevant? The question is loaded, and needs to be dismantled with care. At present, I shall limit myself to examining three different answers offered by three recent authors.[1] At one extreme, Mr. Osborne argues that it is not the artistic function of literature to tell us anything: "Truth, originality and profundity of ideas are not, and cannot be, in any way integral to poetic excellence." At another extreme, Mr. Vivas claims that the literary artist presents something akin to knowledge: "To discover in its specificity the nature and structure of experience as lived, and to present it in terms that men can grasp, is the creative task of the artist." Somewhere between the two, Mr. Meyerhoff suggests that ideas in literature are of a special subjective sort, since they make no verifiable truth-claims and since they portray the world of inner experience as opposed to the world of objective occurrences: " (literary) truth, understanding, and insight seem to belong exclusively to a single work, the unique experiences, people, and situations depicted in it, and the peculiar, subjective view of them taken by the author." To my mind, these are all wrong answers. They are all based upon a fundamental misconception about the nature of literary art, though it is a misconception that manifests itself differently in each of the three accounts.

Mr. Osborne's argument is a running criticism of realism in all its forms. He distinguishes between the aesthetic function and the "utility-function" of paintings and poems, and he claims that realistic effects are always utilitarian, never aesthetic. Among other things, this means that readers who concern themselves with the plausibility of a work, who wonder about its philosophical adequacy and the authenticity of its representation, are inevitably treating it as a "utility-object." Mr. Osborne does not deny that there are often good reasons for focussing upon the way in which literature portrays reality; he merely denies that such concentration can ever be aesthetic. This position is so extreme in its limitations, so arbitrary in its use of the word "aesthetic," and so pernicious in its effects upon criticism, that one might well let it crumble beneath the weight of its own absurdity. In the case of Mr. Osborne's presentation, however, the argument is chock full of *non sequiturs* which admirably and conveniently illus-

[1] AESTHETICS AND CRITICISM, by *Harold Osborne*. Philosophical Library. $6. CREATION AND DISCOVERY: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM AND AESTHETICS, by *Eliseo Vivas*. The Noonday Press. $5. TIME IN LITERATURE, by *Hans Meyerhoff*. U. of California Press. $3.50.

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trate the logical impossibility of any such position. For instance, Mr. Osborne wants to argue that " 'internal consistency' and not conformity with the actual is the sole standard of 'aesthetic truth' in literary art." He reaches this conclusion by alleging that when we treat literature "as literature" we agree to a suspension of disbelief, to accepting as plausible everything that the author consistently asks us to. This proposition he defends by saying that unless we did suspend disbelief we could not be aware of the work as make-believe, which is indispensable if one is to treat it aesthetically. The argumentative leap occurs in the assumption that one must suspend disbelief in order to appreciate make-believe. But that is obviously false. I consider *Roderick Hudson* inferior to *The Spoils of Poynton* because it conforms much less to the way in which real people live and act. I am aware of this difference between the two works because I refuse to suspend my disbelief, because I refuse to ignore the many respects in which the early novel is superficial. And yet, I perfectly realize that both works are make-believe: it is as such that I appreciate them, as such that I consider one to be more authentic, more profound than the other.

In a similar vein, Mr. Osborne argues that wisdom or plausibility cannot be used as an aesthetic standard because critics often value works which are neither wise nor plausible and that anyhow critics greatly differ in their philosophical attitudes. But here again *non sequitur*: though it is true that wisdom and plausibility are by no means the *only* criteria for evaluation, it does not follow that they are aesthetically irrelevant. Different works of literature require different kinds of standards. We do not approach a fairy tale as if it were a realistic novel, or a lyric as if it were an epic. One of the most important standards used in evaluating epics and realistic novels involves their wisdom or plausibility. There is no reason for denying that such a standard is specifically "aesthetic"; and though critics disagree about what actually is wise or plausible, this in itself does not prevent any of them from defending his judgments on the grounds of wisdom and plausibility. In another place, Mr. Osborne claims that ideas in a poem can never be aesthetically relevant since they may always be abstracted from their context and paraphrased without loss, whereas a poem *as* a poem can never be paraphrased. But even if we agreed that ideas can be abstracted at will, which is itself rather dubious, it does not follow that the ideas *in* a poem have no effect upon the aesthetic excellence of that poem. In other words, the whole question of the possibility of abstraction or paraphrase has nothing to do with the aesthetic function of ideas prior to abstraction or paraphrase. Finally, Mr. Osborne states that realistic effects must be ulterior and non-aesthetic since they are not effects peculiar to works of art: "there are other ways of learning about the atrocities of the Nazis than by reading *The Wall*." Of course there are; but that fact does not render

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the realistic descriptions of *The Wall* aesthetically irrelevant. You might as well say that *words* are ulterior to the aesthetic nature of literature since philosophers use them as well as poets. Let us pass on.

In contrast to Mr. Osborne's aesthetic isolationism, Mr. Vivas insists that great literature always conforms to something in the world: rather than inventing *ex nihilo*, the artist extricates from his subject-matter "its own proper structure or order." This is the element of discovery. On the other hand, artistic endeavor is also creative: it fabricates something new and original, something that is neither a copy nor an imitation, something that can absorb into itself all of the attention of the spectator. The contrast between creation and discovery Mr. Vivas develops as a "seeming paradox" which it is the main burden of the book to resolve. Unfortunately, the resolution is as unconvincing as it is obscure. One is glad to hear that Mr. Vivas thinks that literary art tells us something about the world; but how sad the awakening when we learn what he considers that "something" to be! He begins by telling us that the artist discloses "the hidden reality of our practical, commonsense world," he goes on to say that art is about "ideal objects," and he ends up by assigning these queer entities to an order of subsistent being, a "realm beyond existence." The indulgent reader will say that all this precious talk is really a symbolic device for promulgating the philosopher's message. I, for one, am eager to be indulgent: I know that metaphorical philosophy can often give us much to conjure with. In the case of Mr. Vivas' aesthetics, however, the message is too thin, too barren, to support the ontological metaphors. Beneath the crushing load of tinsel and colored paper, one finds little more than undeveloped utterances whose full import is hard to decipher. Mr. Vivas *seems* to want to say that literary artists bring to a dramatic focus aspects of human life which are important and pervasive but ordinarily neglected. If this means that great men of letters are highly perceptive, it is undoubtedly true—as true as it is trivial. If, however, Mr. Vivas means that great writers have a private pipeline to a special kind of reality, I don't know what to say. How could one demonstrate the existence of their unique "discovery"? Where in literature would we begin to look? Mr. Vivas' literary criticism traces the influence of a few ideas in the writings of Dreiser, James, Kafka, and Dostoyevsky; it makes interesting reading, occasionally profitable, often suggestive; but it nowhere discloses aesthetic contacts with hidden realities.

Furthermore, the notion of "creation," as Mr. Vivas employs it, leads to paradoxes that cannot be resolved as neatly as Mr. Vivas pretends. For instance, we are told that "the world of affairs . . . is a world we grasp by means of an initial creative act of the mind which is in essence identical with the aesthetic vision." The "aesthetic vision," however, was elsewhere described as the discovery of "the nature and structure of experience as lived." Now if the initial creative act is in essence identical with the aesthetic vision, that vision cannot be a discovery

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since as yet there is nothing to *be* discovered. That is to say, if the aesthetic vision is really discovery, it cannot be identical with the alleged initial creative act. A similar difficulty arises in Mr. Vivas' analysis of aesthetic experience. According to Mr. Vivas, a literary work takes on aesthetic dimensions when it "appears as self-sufficient or autonomous, in the sense that . . . it is able to capture attention *intransitively* upon itself, and is thus able to prevent the mind from seeking comparisons between it and the actual world." But if this is so, how can there be any kind of discovery in literature, how can works of literary art ever manifest conformance to reality? Or does Mr. Vivas think there is some way of getting to his preferential reality without passing through the merely actual world?

Mr. Meyerhoff's position falls between the other two; it also seems to waver between them. Like Mr. Vivas, he claims that great literature discloses "eternal essences" and in one place he goes as far as to say: "There is very little poetry which is not concerned with preserving the timeless nature of certain qualities in human experience." Alas, we are never told how poetry goes about "preserving" these certain qualities, and needless to say, their timeless nature remains eternally unclear. In his later section on "truth in literature," Mr. Meyerhoff seems to modify his position in the direction of Mr. Osborne's kind of aesthetics. He now says that literary truth is limited to the individual character of a particular work, so that conformance to actuality is out of the question. In order to explain how it is that literature does tell us about the world, Mr. Meyerhoff distinguishes between literary truth and scientific truth. He insists that once we move beyond the "uniqueness and single-mindedness" of an individual work, we are no longer considering its literary truth. He says that generalizations about life cannot belong to the aesthetic context of literature since they always involve an inference beyond what is actually given in the work itself. Thus, to look for insights about human nature, to expect a novel to give us "a clue to causes and motivations," is to treat literature scientifically and not aesthetically. This position seems to emanate from Mr. Meyerhoff's belief that literature is "subjective" in two respects: first, that it portrays human experience as it comes and before it has been analyzed into the artificial, though objective, categories of science; second, that literary values are always restricted to the unique experiences that an author, for reasons peculiar to himself, happens to present in a single work.

On both of these points, the difficulties seem insurmountable. It is certainly true that literature deals with human experiences, but so does psychology, which Mr. Meyerhoff considers to be scientific and therefore non-subjective. At times Mr. Meyerhoff sounds as if literature is to be distinguished from psychology on the grounds that the latter describes inter-subjective events and the former does not. This would reduce literature to a kind of introspectionism, even though great

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writers have always recognized that the analysis of character requires description in terms of observable states of affairs. Mr. Meyerhoff seems to think that just because literature is different from science, i.e. subjects like physics and technical psychology, its scope must somehow be limited to the hidden privacy of solitary individuals. The consequences of this initial error are rather serious, since they lead Mr. Meyerhoff to astounding conclusions about the nature of experience and the nature of literature. For instance, Mr. Meyerhoff considers dreams and fantasies to be clear cases of subjectivity; in dreams and fantasies he discerns a continuous temporal flow, an intermixture of "before" and "after" which suspends the objective categories of past and future; from this he concludes that "it is not difficult to take another step and say that the ordinary modalities of time—past, present, and future—are, strictly speaking, indistinguishable in experience." Whether or not it is difficult to take this further step I cannot say; but it is a step that surely does violence to our ordinary experience. Even if the modalities of time are indistinguishable in dreams and fantasies, the same cannot possibly be true of all other experiences. If it were, how could we ever have got the idea of time in the first place? And if we cannot describe ordinary experience in terms of dreams, neither can we defend the use of dream symbolism in recent literature by saying that it is particularly suitable for conveying the flow of ordinary experience. Mr. Meyerhoff offers this defense. He forgets that dream symbolism in literature derives most of its effectiveness from the fact that it is so *unlike* ordinary experience. It is this very unlikeness which enables the writer to drive home those features of (modern) life—chaos, disunity, etc.—which his audience might otherwise ignore. In forcing the reader's attention this way, the writer clarifies conditions that are of course relevant to human experience, though they could hardly be called "subjective."

Similarly, I find little reason to believe that literary truth must be subjective in the sense of being restricted to an isolated and wholly individual presentation. Mr. Meyerhoff argues his point by saying that "the case of Swann and Odette does not prove the sado-masochistic pattern of love; it shows it." This is right, I think, if it means that *Du Côté de Chez Swann* is much more than just the (attempted) proof of something. But even if we think of the case of Swann and Odette as primarily an illustration rather than a demonstration, this gives us no basis for denying that the aesthetic context of Proust's novel includes generalizations about life or insights about human nature. To see the love affair as the "showing" of a sado-masochistic pattern is already to see it in terms of something that Proust considered basic to man. Furthermore, even though the relation between Swann and Odette is much *more* than just a proof, I wonder whether it is not that too. Proust doesn't explicitly say "this is how things are: from these premises you get these conclusions"; but he certainly does imply a

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great many premises, a great many conclusions, and a great many modes of inference. These implications are as much a part of the novel as anything else. Without them we could not begin to understand the kind of people Swann and Odette are supposed to represent, or the human condition they are intended to illustrate. Finally, these generalizations are in principle as verifiable as any other statements about the world, and as little (or as much) a function of the author's personal predilection.

At the same time, let us not forget that a Proustian love affair is extremely complex: it cannot be whittled down to any one generalization, or any small number of them. It is much more than either the demonstration or the illustration of sado-masochistic patterns. A Swann or an Odette is a fictional character whose career is largely determined by the author's narrative interests—by his desire to tell a good story, to develop a dramatic system of events, to amuse and stimulate the reader in a variety of ways. The scientist is always free to limit himself to mere demonstration and mere illustration. The artist is never free in this respect. The novelist differs from the professional psychologist in being forced to use his exhibits and his proofs for the sake of something other than mere exhibit and proof.[2] This literary objective is neither the discovery of a world of essences, nor the attainment of an impossible subjectivity, nor the suspending of disbelief. It is simply the writing of a story about people who are drawn from life, either directly or indirectly, but who act as if they had a life of their own. Certainly, Proust was not a psychologist in the sense that Freud was; but he would have been if, instead of narrating the history of a love affair, he had systematized and analyzed in technical detail those generalizations about human nature without which he could never have created Swann and Odette.

Despite their differences, Messrs. Osborne, Vivas and Meyerhoff share the belief that literary truth depends upon a wholly special use of language. This belief is common enough: it is one of the quagmires in which aesthetics has foundered for centuries. It results from the failure to realize that literature does not differ from practical or scientific discourse by virtue of a unique approach to reality. When we say that a novel has literary truth, we do not mean that it expresses something radically peculiar. We only mean that *within its framework as a novel* it gives us profound insights about the world, just as a psychological or sociological description might. Literary truth is not a different kind of truth, and art does not disclose a different kind of Being. A work with literary truth portrays in fictional terms the actual world we all live in. Whatever else literature may do, this at least is *one* of the ways in which it attains aesthetic value.

[2] Proust meant nothing more, I take it, when he said "une oeuvre où il y a des théories est comme un objet sur lequel on laisse la marque du prix."

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SONYA RUDIKOFF

Theories, and Art Itself

To COUNT as an aesthetic theory, a certain set of related ideas must be philosophically adequate, must deal with the general case, and should solve or attempt to solve certain problems ignored or avoided by Croce, Plato, Kant or Victor Cousin. Philosophical theories have similar obligations, and so do theories of social structure, of literary form, of personality development, credit, functions, or sets. Now, everyone knows that an argument may be valid without being true; and it is a matter of indifference to ethical theory whether or not Sidgwick had moments of personal moral perception. Indeed, the success of most theories almost *depends* on their remoteness from the specific case: a theory of culture change should not be restricted to the French-Canadians or the Tierra del Fuego Indians; a theory of number soon passes beyond the number of apples counted; a theory of small-group behavior would be hampered if it were too closely concerned with any particular instance of interaction in any special "face-to-face group." *Specific* events like my birth or death, and yours, are quite essential for the development of *theories* about events; but there will always be a sufficient number of such events, all reducible to laws, so that the philosopher need not worry about the personal dimension which matters to *us.* Besides, that subjective business is "not his field"—isn't it really psychology? Only a novelist would bother trying to discover "what really happened."

The relation of aesthetic theories to art is inevitably different from the relation between other theories and their "raw material." No aesthetician can be quite so cavalier about individual instances without seeming to betray art; and being cavalier about theoretical obligations betrays philosophy. But art is nothing if not particular and specific: this painting, that piece of sculpture or relief, a certain symphony, a recent concert, an unfamiliar epic, a favorite play. Philosophers may talk about aesthetic experiences, but one wants to know very soon whether they mean looking at churches, hearing opera, or reading a novel. Even a theory about Cézanne's composition must remain in close touch with Uncle Dominic, Madame Cézanne in the conservatory, a blue vase, or some apples and pears. The specific always matters in art.

Of course, no one can proceed without some general ideas; whether they are useful or not will depend on the intellectual climate, the ideas themselves, and the quality of the mind that holds them. Still, a given theory about art need not even be very bad to have a paralyzing effect, or to obscure the recalcitrant work of art which doesn't fit. The *very*

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best theories will do this, because it is the nature of theories to value similarity, to demand general laws rather than individual variation, to account for the specific, not contemplate it—in short, always to simplify that intricate reality of the tangible.

Has aesthetic theory suffered a loss in authority, as Mr. Trilling suggested recently? This is surely true, although the theoretical habit of mind has not weakened during the last thirty or forty years; indeed, if anything, theory itself has increased in attraction. But its force now appears in the terms of ritual and mythic theories about art, psychoanalytic theories, social or moral or theological theories; *these* now have the intellectual cachet which was once the mark of aesthetics. No one needs to be persuaded of their influence in literary discussions; the (by now) notorious book of Stanley Hyman's, *The Armed Vision,* was written to demonstrate this very point, that modern criticism differs from the older sort because it uses non-literary theories and data to discuss literature. Even where the other arts are concerned, an interest in such theories and data is, for many people, sufficient to obscure any worries about The Beautiful. And now The Beautiful must compete with the ritual form, the social fact, the psychological intention.

Still, even if one believes that, say, still-life essentially records a ritual act with respect to ritual objects of growth and rebirth, this would not account for the *change* in Braque's still-life between 1927 and 1954. Granted the ritual intention of *The Terrace* (1954) in the recent Braque show at Paul Rosenberg, or a similar still-life of 1952 at Perls, there is nothing to suggest why the recent paintings are so much less good than still-life pictures from the Twenties, or the earlier Cubist ones. They are not by definition any the less ritualistic. Similarly, if art forms are socially determined, or derive from psychological matrices, there, too, the very completeness of those assumptions can curtail their own further relevance. Of course, intelligence will continue to use such ideas in criticism, but only initial skirmishes with the whole theory will be of *interest*, because once the point is granted, no one instance can be any more sociological or ritualistic or psychological than any other. The middle class can always be found ruining taste, or the upper class fostering it, depending on your theory; Jackson Pollock's *Pasiphae* is no more socially determined than Chartres, and no less, either; de Kooning's *Composition 1955* shown at the Guggenheim is subject to the same laws of social causation as his earlier "women" series. One could track Cézanne's scoptophilia in every still-life, Shakespeare's Oedipus complex in every play; the new van Eyck at the Frick is every inch as psychological as the art of schizophrenics.

The point is obvious: general laws such as these *can* become, in the end, just as uninteresting as aesthetics, just as irrelevant to the specific, to taste, value, change, or quality. "Try and imagine this theory," says the Captain, in *Cards of Identity*, "as a big hall in which you find yourself. Unwilling to remain, you walk to the nearest exit, only to

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find a huge sentry barring your way with a friendly smile. Well, our theory has such a sentry posted at every possible exit, including the skylight and the main drain. The sentries are infallible; they never sleep, they know no error. They were awaiting you many years before you entered the hall, they already know by heart every word of the pleadings and tearful briberies that you will use against them. They are the perfect servants of a perfected theory—by which I mean, a theory which no conflict with experience can ever alter or revise."

These reflections arose after my recent reading of *Art and Visual Perception*, by Rudolf Arnheim, a massive and handsomely-produced book which is devoted to a psychological theory about art.[1] Now, if an article is said to deal with psychology and art, or if anyone announces this as his field of interest, or if lectures, books or symposia are heralded in this form, most people would predict psychoanalytic symbols and patterns, or TAT and Rorschach tests, or possibly children or schizophrenics, or perhaps something Dr. Rosen has done. Professor Arnheim's psychology, however, is that of gestalt perception, which indicates a very good reason for noticing his book. Outside of academic circles, "psychology" usually means motives, and when art is involved, the greater emphasis will be given to symbols, expressions, and patterns which reveal motives. This is not surprising, because a motive psychology is clearly very congenial to that individual consciousness which finds expression or resonance in works of art. The theory Professor Arnheim brings to art can therefore serve as a valuable contrast to the prevailing tendency, and offer some very interesting ideas on the subject itself. Further, it can provide an excellent illustration of the problems posed by a theory about art, and, in this case, the theory itself has some comment to make on them.

"Gestalt" may be taken to mean "whole," "configuration," or "pattern"; in French, the psychology of that name is called "la psychologie de la forme," and, as everyone knows, the name derives from von Ehrenfels' essay, "Uber Gestalt-qualitäten," which proposed that a melody is different from the sum of tones that constitute it, and that the tones could be transposed into another key and still maintain the same relational quality. From the very first, this psychology had implications for art, and, in many respects, it is more congenial to the processes of art than any other, perhaps in its emphasis on the intuitive perception of meaningful forms, that is, a perception unaided by the rationalizing intellect. Nothing could provide greater support for the intention of the non-verbal arts in particular.

Now, the term "configuration" is familiar to many people, but the theoretical assumptions about it may not be, so I would like to go over some of them. Thus, visual perception is to be viewed as an *activity* engaged in by the eye, a complex structure, the brain, even more com-

[1] ART AND VISUAL PERCEPTION, by *Rudolf Arnheim*. University of California Press. $10.

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plex, and the innumerable stimuli of the tangible world. Instead of mechanically recording stimuli, this intricate and dynamic visual system of cerebral cortex, optic nerve, and retinae is assumed to be actively at work in selecting, organizing, and clarifying the stimuli that reach it. In other words, the visual stimuli are not to be thought of as transferred to the retina and then interpreted by the intellect. Of course, the number of stimuli received in any moment defy enumeration, and the number of neural operations during the same moment are equally difficult to examine, especially because the stimuli do not stop, and neither does the eye close itself off from stimuli as yet unorganized into perceptual patterns. The descriptions we are given of the eye's activities seem to resemble not the see-saw of stimulus and response, or the mechanical photographic transfer of images, but rather something like an incredibly fast cocktail party, with people coming and going all the time, and the eye as a kind of indefatigable hostess forming groups, making introductions, saying goodbye and serving food, all at once. This maelstrom of stimuli would be insupportable if the eye, like a harried hostess, had no characteristic identity or behavior. Fortunately, this is not the case; the eye behaves in certain predictable ways, according to certain laws, and exhibits its constant tendencies repeatedly.

How *does* the eye act, then? And what importance does this have for the visual arts? Professor Arnheim examines the kinds of configurations through which the eye perceives balance, space, depth, shape, light, color, and so on, and in each case attempts to show how the laws of perception and the character of the particular stimuli combine to provide a certain visual experience. Professor Arnheim relies on the basic law of visual perception (according to gestalt psychologists), which asserts that any stimulus pattern tends to be seen in such a way that the resulting structure will be as simple as the given conditions permit. Simplicity of structure does not, however, mean impoverishment or limitation; rather, a simple perceptual structure means the organization of complex material with the simplest possible number of structural features. A wheel, for example, is simple structurally in this sense, because even though its radii are numerous, they are all repetitions of the same structural feature, and the circle is the simplest structure of all. A square is thus simpler than a rectangle because all four sides are equal in length and lie at the same distance from the center; also, only two directions are used in the square, and all angles are equal. The triangle, in contrast, may have fewer actual elements than the square, but they vary more in size and location, and are not symmetrical. A straight line is simple because it uses one unchanging direction. Parallel lines are also simpler than converging lines. A right angle is simpler than an oblique angle; it produces a subdivision of space based on the repetition of the same angle. Further, the strength of the stimuli is an important factor: for example, a figure seen at a

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great distance exerts very weak stimuli, so the perceptual mechanism applies the simplest possible shape to it, that is, a circle; the man on the horizon appears as a dot.

In its pressure for simple structures, the eye will sharpen or reduce the stimuli; it will emphasize one pattern over another to make sense out of an ambiguous cluster of stimuli; it may equalize disproportionate stimuli and eliminate oblique detail; on the other hand, oblique and asymmetrical detail may be made stronger in order to clarify the pattern. Complex shapes will be subdivided, compact figures with ambiguous outlines will be broken up into a unified structure of simpler shapes. It is this tendency toward simplest structure which enables the eye to see a bunch of grapes as composed of individual circular or ovoid shapes rather than as an irregular mysterious and complex shape. Or the eye sees the subdivided patterns made by a man getting out of an automobile, instead of seeing the undifferentiated pattern as a grotesque moving monster—and it is the contention of gestalt theory that the eye sees these simpler shapes not because of prior experience or knowledge of the shapes of men, grapes or automobiles, but because greater perceptual simplicity is achieved; that is, the subdivision of shapes occurs before they are individually identified.

These patterns of simple structure arise in the cortical field of vision in response to perceptual qualities; for example, the stimuli coming from the man and from the automobile will be different, and the eye "structures" this difference. But the tendency to perceive simplest structure cannot of course manifest itself without interference. Stimuli repeatedly disturb the cortical forces' attempts at organization; and it is this tension between the innumerable and various stimuli and the simplifying perceptual tendency which produces the configurations. Perception is immediate, according to gestalt psychologists, and not dependent on calculation, nor upon knowledge. We make perceptual judgments all the time about size, shape, color, and so on, without measuring inches, yards or wave lengths. Configurations of stimuli are seen with similar immediacy, but this kind of perception is not arbitrary, nor are the configurations capricious or irrational; stimuli bear a direct relation to the properties of the object that is perceived, and conscious perception corresponds to physiological processes in the neural field.

It was Max Wertheimer who, more than thirty years ago, formulated some rules of visual grouping to suggest why certain elements will be seen as belonging together more than others. Professor Arnheim bases his remarks on these rules, with the qualification that all are to be understood as examples of a rule of similarity; that is, the degree to which parts of a pattern resemble each other in some perceptual quality will then determine the degree to which they are seen as belonging together. The following figures will illustrate some of these rules of grouping considered as examples of an essential principle of similarity:

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Fig. 1

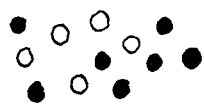

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

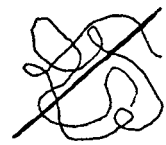

Fig. 6

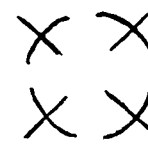

Fig. 7

Figure 1 shows a group of units that are equal in shape and orientation, irregularly distributed, but forming patterns by reason of similarity in size: the large squares and the smaller squares form separate patterns. Figure 2 shows patterns formed because of similarity in brightness; the dark circles as against the light ones; Figure 3 shows grouping based on similarity of shape. Figure 4 illustrates grouping by similarity of location, Figure 5 by similarity of spatial orientation. (In such arts as the dance and the film, similarity of speed and direction will serve this purpose.) Figures 6 and 7 show grouping based on a rule of consistent shape. In Figure 6, the straight line is the more consistent shape, and the figure is seen as a straight line running through a tangled curved line. In Figure 7, the same principle will produce a circle with a cross running through it, rather than four irregular crosses. The eye will also simplify by completing the directions indicated in the given lines. A broken curve will suggest its continuation into the completed circle, and the perceptual tendency will be to complete indicated shapes or suggested directions. Perhaps I hardly need emphasize that these patterns are not what we see, but merely illustrate the tendency of perceptual processes. It will be observed that these rules represent a further development of the principle of simplicity, applying here to the perceptual patterns made out of those simple structures already discussed.

But what has this to do with art? Anyone who has followed the discussion so far may have found this perception all very interesting but not particularly relevant. Even outside of art, in any other activity of daily life, other kinds of stimuli and other groupings will interfere with discrete configurations, and stimuli can never be sorted with reference to only one of their properties. If one takes the rules of grouping too literally or applies them too directly to pictures, then the result is a very pedestrian kind of "art appreciation," and not worth all this attention. Visual perception of art objects is still some distance from the perceptual patterns presented above. Perhaps it should be noted that the rules of grouping are not rules of "good design," that they are not shown in the picture but in the perceptual tendency, and

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further, that in works of art this tendency to apply simplest structure to the visual stimuli received must encounter "fields of force" already organized in the picture in a way that differs from the organization of the natural world or the world of mechanical objects. It is the difference between the eye's organizing stimuli proceeding from a plant, and making out of it the pattern of leaf, stem, and flower; and the quite other task of applying configurations to the visual stimuli which come from a Dürer *drawing* of a plant. In each case, perceptual qualities reveal the nature of the thing perceived, but very differently. It is of the greatest importance to note that in making a drawing of the plant, Dürer would develop *aesthetic* configurations in order to reveal the natural ones by means of which we see the plant. Professor Arnheim's hypotheses would have been greatly helped by some intermediate step between perceptual laws and works of art, such as a *model* of a picture, which could have indicated how a number of such laws act at once, in counterpoint, ambiguity, conflict, and conjunction.

The simplifying tendency is revealed in its most unusual functions in the way it creates, or interferes with the creation of, three-dimensionality. For example, the simpler a shape given to certain stimuli, the more it resists being perceived in depth, because depth only compensates for some distortion of simple shapes. The perceptual goal is to preserve those shapes; when oblique projections threaten the constancy or integrity of, say, a cube, it appears not as a distorted hexagonal shape subdivided by rhomboid shapes (also distortions), but instead as the simpler cube in three dimensions. The shape is thus preserved, and distortions are eliminated. Gradients—the gradual increase or decrease of some perceptual quality—create the illusion of depth in a two-dimensional plane because they too produce distortions which irritate the simplifying tendency. Converging lines, for example, are a distortion of the simpler parallel lines; it is the gradual diminishing of space between the lines that suggests depth. A series of squares gradually decreasing in size or brightness or in nearness to a horizontal base line, or in other respects, will be seen in depth because such a series would involve similar distortions. Foreshortening and three-quarter views involve very complex distortions from the frontal plane, and central perspective would represent a *unified* scientific distortion of all the forms and space in a circumscribed area, with the distortions controlled by their relation to a certain vanishing point. Frontal perspective involves fewer distortions, maintains shape more, but also provides less of an illusion of depth, because there is less need for that compensation.

Texture (which is, among other things, an example of similarity of the location of certain linear elements), the question of figure and ground, of negative space in sculpture, overlapping, interpenetration of planes, gradations of value, color, size, or line, variations of shape, conscious distortions—all such features can be examined in terms of

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the perceptual tendency toward simplifying distortions; and from that simplification—so the assumption runs—the visual forms we know, both in art and outside it, develop into their ultimate complexity. The details of Professor Arnheim's argument make very interesting reading, and their implications are enormously suggestive.

Throughout the discussion one is struck by the curious character assumed for the perceptual tendency: its goal of simple structure sounds more and more like the homeostatic goal of repose, and the dynamics of perception resemble the organism's agitated progress in a world seemingly designed to interfere with repose. Stimuli repeatedly and intricately and incessantly prevent the perceptual tendency from reaching entire simplicity. Homeostasis is quite a debatable concept, and so, I should think, is this idea of the tendency toward simplicity. A comparison between them is very much worth pondering, however. One can see that, as with the homeostatic goal, it is desirable that this perceptual tendency toward simplicity *should not reach its goal.*

Given a universal human endowment with the perceptual tendencies hypothesized by Professor Arnheim, one wonders—how was it that certain "eyes" could "see" the Impressionists, while others could see only Bonnecontre or Bougereau? The Fauves—their very name indicates that their pictures could not be "seen." Raphael and Parmigianino: was it not essentially the same perceptual mechanism which found one of them *divine*, and then subsequently found the Madonna with the Long Neck to be beautiful? Or in our own day, consider the people who can "see" everything up to Cubism, but nothing beyond, and especially none of the abstract expressionists? What happens then?

It is the assumption of Professor Arnheim's theory that stimuli reflect the real properties of objects—the tactile sense of, say, velvet is different from that of burlap because of the nature of the materials, not because we choose to feel them as different. And the stimuli from a picture reflect the varying properties of paint. With a relatively unimpaired brain, the perceptual tendencies in each of us will operate in much the same way. But surely we don't conduct a discussion of, say, the new Hofmann at the Whitney Annual in terms of the degree of perfection in our relative optical fields, yet we assume that the physical picture remains the same.

Professor Arnheim was under no obligation to deal with this question of aesthetic *judgments*; his interest is all in aesthetic *processes* considered according to the laws of gestalt perception, but inevitably his argument is full of implied positions about good and bad art. Two of them are particularly troublesome (as such things *can* be, when the author doesn't discuss them directly): it is possible to conclude from this book that *any* work of art can be analysed in terms of these perceptual qualities—Grandma Moses, or Picabia; Bronzino or Sassoferrato, Tanguy or Chirico. Therefore, the gestalt analysis carries no more implications about their relative aesthetic values than would a

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chemical analysis of the paint surfaces or the condition of the canvas or panel. Yet there is also a contradictory implication, that good art is good because it accords with the perceptual tendencies discussed throughout the book. Now, this is clearly an important problem, and one of great interest, but it receives no explicit consideration from Professor Arnheim.

I would suggest that this problem cannot be dealt with because of prior difficulties with the whole question of what is involved in art *besides* perception. For, differences in the completeness of perception can hardly account for the incredible variations in aesthetic judgments —and I mean not only the changes in taste through history, or the differences between Paris and the Easter Islands, but differences as they exist among those who share the same culture, live in the same place, even share the same profession. Where do these disagreements come from? Professor Arnheim would probably consider this question unimportant; his concern is much more with the source and the meagreness of perceptual experiences. And in indicating how much there is in art to perceive, he could convince any unperceiver, so passionate is he, so very enthusiastic about art, and so willing to support the making of art in all its curious intricacies. His very theory of perception conceives of art as creative people think of it—that is, in its tangible perceptual actuality, and illuminated by those manifold ways of the non-rationalistic understanding which all great ages have known, that intuitive immediate understanding which is at once lucid and affecting. Any partisan of art will join with alacrity in this noble attempt. Forms themselves, *perceptually*, are meaningful—who that loves art will not assent?

But these meanings communicate poorly to some, well to others, and to still others not at all. And how is it that people whose perceptual lives must be assumed not to be meagre will disagree? Professor Arnheim believes that perception is also involved with the "mental set" of the perceiver, his attitudes, prejudices, needs, training, taste, experience, etc. This forms no part of the argument, which is rather devoted to showing perceptual laws in aesthetic experience. But that is just where the difficulty lies: as a lover of art, Professor Arnheim would think taste matters, but as a gestaltist, he seems to want to keep perception quite independent of it. Art, however, requires a reciprocal relation between taste or knowledge or training or experience, and perception itself; this is essential for both the perceiver and the creator. What kind of perception would be *prior* to these things, and at what later point would they begin to matter? And *how* would they matter, and what would it mean for art?

This question about taste hovers at the edge of a major conflict in psychology, that is, the relative importance of perception and learning. Do we perceive the square distinctly in its squareness first, and then learn what it is, or do we identify those lines and angles as a square

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Notes on Contributors

EZRA POUND'S *Section: Rock-Drill (Cantos 85-95)* has just been brought out by New Directions.

The poet and critic JOHN HOLLOWAY is a Fellow of Queens' College, Cambridge.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE'S translation of Euripides' *Helen* will be published soon by Chicago.

MAY SARTON, the well-known novelist and poet, lives in Cambridge, Mass.

VERNON WATKINS' last book, *The Death Bell*, was the first choice of the newly-formed Poetry Book Society; it is available in this country from New Directions.

JOHN HOLLANDER is a Junior Fellow in the Society of Fellows at Harvard.

G. E. DIMOCK, JR. teaches in the Department of Classical Languages and Literature at Smith College; he is writing a book on the *Odyssey*.

HAROLD NORSE is an American poet who has been living in Rome since 1953. Alberto Moravia and William Carlos Williams have written separate introductions for a book of his Belli translations, which is being planned for publication in Italy in a bilingual edition.

FRANK BUTLER is a young writer living in New York City; this is his first published work.

WILL C. JUMPER teaches high school in Modesto, California and is working on his Ph.D. in American Literature at Stanford.

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IRVING SINGER, at present a post-doctoral Fulbright Scholar in Paris, is writing a book on philosophy in literature. His edition of Santayana's *Essays in Literary Criticism* will be published by Scribner's this fall.

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LISA DYER, Managing Editor

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 6th day of October, 1955.

WILLIAM G. NIBLETTE
Notary Public

(My commission expires March 30, 1956.)

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because of an intellectual recognition of something previously identified? The ramifications of this problem belong to psychology, but we can see that the problem itself arises inevitably, even from a discussion limited to art. Like many gestalt psychologists, Professor Arnheim often argues as if learning *interfered* with perception, and that whatever is learned about art precludes the sensuous perception of forms and the experience of perceptual patterns. This is undeniably a danger, especially in our highly rationalistic culture. But, as the argument proceeds, one wonders if perception does not really mean *naked perception,* and learning the deadly chains and steel trap of civilization. Now, however the quarrel may be conducted in other disciplines, there is no doubt about the outcome in art: something more than perception was needed to paint the Sistine Ceiling or *Demoiselles d'Avignon* or the Arezzo frescoes or the newly acquired Monet at the Museum of Modern Art, and something more than perception is required to enjoy them. Berenson's very *métier* is an exercise in perception joined with learning—can one conceive of his "eye" for Italian painting without his knowledge? The point argues itself.

A painter, looking at something in progress, says, "It's not quite right." Spectators looking at, say, the new de Kooning shown at the Guggenheim could be heard to say, "It doesn't come off, that middle red section isn't right." These judgments are made with some reference to a concept of "right" relations among parts of a whole, in other words, the Gestalt. To perceive the absence of these "right" relations is to sense some want of completion, or some imperfectly developed form, or something too strong or too weak, or some possibility which was indicated but unrealized. Now, naked perception does not discern unrealized possibilities; these are yielded by taste, by learning, by experience or by knowledge. Art has its own history; and it makes a great difference whether the person who finds the de Kooning "not right" has seen any modern painting before, or any painting at all. Of course, these unrealized possibilities or incomplete directions must be *perceived,* they cannot come from a syllogism or a rule. But not everybody knows what to look for. The history of art would be very different from what it has been if this were not so. "Rightness," some relational quality obtaining among the intricate forms in a work of art, can obviously arise in terms of many different vocabularies, which in turn will modify the concept of "rightness."

The perception Professor Arnheim has been talking about is perception of tangible qualities, specific actual things like this shape or that red or why the picture plane stays flat. And he continually challenges the claim of the abstract or rationalizing intellect to have knowledge of tangible things prior to the perception of them. But another gestalt psychologist, Konrad Lorenz, can show that the perception by means of configuration is actually an *abstract* operation! In perceiving the

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announces for future publication:

Kenneth Burke:	Symbol and Association
Richard Clay:	Maria Gardner *(a story)*
Hubert Creekmore:	Translations from Provençal
William Eastlake:	The Unhappy Hunting Grounds *(a story)*
Richard Eberhart:	The Kite *(a long poem)*
Northrop Frye:	Graves as Poet
Herbert Gold:	Paris and Cleveland are Voyages *(a story)*
Norman N. Holland:	The Laughter of Lawrence Sterne
John Holloway:	The Life and Adventures of Heroic Mr. Clubman
Joseph Kerman:	Orpheus and the Neoclassic Ideal
Earl Roy Miner:	Pound, Haiku, and the Image
Marvin Mudrick:	Chaucer's Nightingales
Ezra Pound:	Canto 97
Ben Reid:	Justice to *Pamela*
Sonya Rudikoff:	Feminism Reconsidered
Irving Singer:	The Language of Aesthetics
Harvey Swados:	A Glance in the Mirror *(a story)*
Yvor Winters:	Problems for the Modern Critic of Literature

Poetry by William Alfred, Hayden Carruth, George P. Elliott, Charles Gullans, Donald Justice, W. S. Merwin, Howard Moss, Ronald L. Perry and others.

Chronicles and Reviews by Daniel Aaron, Robert Martin Adams, William Becker, William Frost, Hugh Kenner, John Logan, William Meredith, Douglass Parker, Louis Simpson, Vernon Young and others.

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angible stimuli, the brain presumably applies structural patterns which are themselves highly abstract, and it preserves these abstractions from all the tangible varied stimuli. Further, because of its immediacy and abstracting tendency, this perception is liable to err, hard to trace, difficult to correct. But this is a curious development—that the most *perceptual* perception is at the same time the most abstract!

Resolutions of the problem must be left to the gestaltists, but useful analogies with art are obvious and very suggestive. In fact, I should like to end on this note: the greatest value of Professor Arnheim's theories is an analogical one. What he says must not always be taken too directly, otherwise the results are foolish: a Cézanne still-life is seen to show "prosperous peace" because of certain vertical and curvilinear forms, a Picasso still-life "catastrophic turmoil" because of angularities, harsh contours, or distorted relation to frame and plane. "The basic perceptual pattern carries the theme," Professor Arnheim has been saying, but there is a danger that the basic pattern, interpreted too literally, means the one most easily identified; this makes for an overly simple translation from theory to example. It is quite possible for the Picasso to be "dead," despite its jangling shocks, or the Cézanne much more "alive" despite ostensibly soporific curves. Besides, every picture, every piece of sculpture, every mural, relief, church hanging, façade or monument is perceptually complex. One must not find simplest structure in Bramante's Tempietto, and the disintegration or lack of it in Sant'Agnese in Agone; nor should one see lack of simplest structure in a Pollock, presence of it in a Clyfford Still painting. Such mechanical applications are not only foolish, but wrong, because the simplest structure of gestalt hypothesis is presumably in the brain field, not in the picture.

But any theory can serve the abstracting and simplifying tendency. And here the gestalt theory provides a comment on itself.

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